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ABSTRACT

This book reports an observational study of the quality of care given by 39 registered childminders in four London boroughs to 40 two-year-old children (25 boys and 15 girls). Minders and most of the 28 mothers invclved were interviewed at home. Children were observed both at home and at their minders' homes. Children's language skills were also assessed. Findings indicate that the quality of care provided was unacceptably low, that few minders were motivated primarily by a concern for children and that nearly 40 percent of the childminders looked after more children than they were licensed to care for. Some minders who work with children were unwell or depressed. Only one-third provided an adequate range of age-appropriate toys. Children were often kept inside even on fair days. In the interview sessions mothers and children frequently interacted but minders and children interacted infrequently. Eighty-five percent of the children were below average in language development. These inadequacies in relatively favored situations of child care are discussed in terms of poor work conditions and low pay of minders, minder-child and minder-parent relationships, health services and local supervision of child care services. Proposals for service improvement are made. Childminders' and mothers' interview forms are appended along with the childminder assessment checklist. (Author/RH)

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Minder, Mother and Child

Berry Mayall and Pat Petrie

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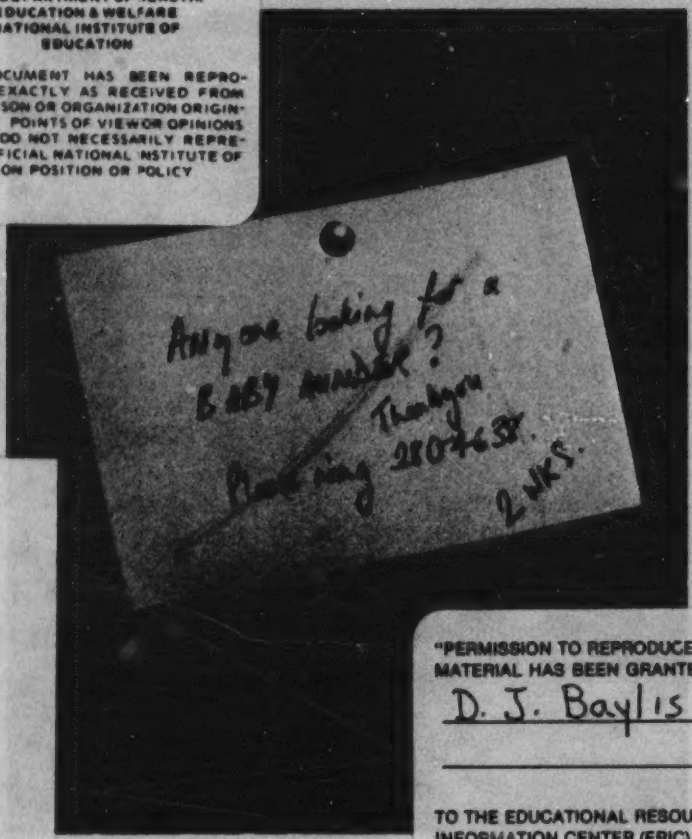

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Foreword by Jack Tizard

Studies in Education (new series) 5

Minder, Mother and Child

Berry Mayall and Pat Petrie
Foreword by Professor Jack Tizard

University of London Institute of Education

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The study was supported by a grant from the Department of Health and Social Security.

B.M. *P.P.*

Mrs Berry Mayall and Mrs Pat Petrie have worked at the Thomas Coram Research Unit for the last three years. The Unit, which is funded by the Department of Health and Social Security, with support from other statutory and voluntary bodies for specific projects, was established under the wing of the University of London Institute of Education in 1973. It takes its name and occupies premises leased from the Thomas Coram Foundation, a voluntary organization caring for children which was founded in 1739 by the eighteenth-century merchant sea captain, shipbuilder and philanthropist, Captain Thomas Coram. The Unit is concerned with factors affecting the health, education and development of normal and handicapped children and their families, and with the role of services in promoting their well-being. Professor Jack Tizard is Director of the Unit.

Shirley O'Loughlin's cover picture is adapted from a childminder advertisement seen on a newsagent's notice board.

Foreword

In England at least 100,000 children under the age of five are being cared for during the day by childminders. There may be 200,000 such children: we simply don't know. All we do know is that about 60,000 young children are looked after by minders registered with the local authority – and at least as many, and possibly many more, are thought to spend the day with minders who are not registered with the local authority.

Britain is not alone in this respect. In France, where 27 per cent of mothers of children under three are in employment, it is estimated that between 500,000 and 600,000 children under three are with *nourrices gardiennes*, But there, too, fewer than half the minders are registered with the public authorities, despite France's long-standing concern with child welfare and child health. In the United States between one and two million pre-school children are thought to be in private day foster care – but only 10 per cent of the homes to which they go to be minded are in fact licensed. The pattern is repeated throughout the industrial world. Much concern is expressed about unregulated childminding. Yet few countries have done anything much to improve it, and hardly anyone has seriously examined how minding, whether registered or not, works in practice, or what it means for children.

It was in order to investigate the quality of care given by registered childminders, and the implications for children, mothers and minders, that Mrs Mayall and Mrs Petrie carried out the inquiry which forms the basis for this report. The study focuses on 40 children, all aged two, and all with minders registered with social services departments in four London boroughs. The children were being cared for by 39 minders who in aggregate were looking after 155 young children, plus an additional 21 older children before and after school.

The authors set out to study childminding which had already provided some continuity of care; and both the home circumstances of the minders they interviewed and the quality of care they provided were probably better than average. Housing conditions were without exception adequate; a third of the minders had had some relevant

experience or training to work with children other than their own; more than two-thirds had contact with a social worker; and three-fifths had been able to avail themselves of some sort of training scheme since starting minding.

Mrs Mayall and Mrs Petrie, both experienced interviewers of mothers of young children, visited the minders, and most of the mothers, and interviewed them in their own homes. They observed the child's behaviour at the minder's, carefully systematizing and quantifying their observations, and they watched the same child at home with his mother. They then returned to the minder's where they saw the child again and assessed his language skills using a standardized language scale.

It will be evident that the study was well planned, and carefully carried out. Indeed, as a detailed observational study of childminding it is probably unique in the literature.

The findings are disturbing. Some of the minders had taken up this work because they were unwell – and two, who suffered from depression, had actually been advised by their GPs to mind as an antidote to depression. Few appeared to be motivated primarily by a concern for children. And though minders are not normally registered to take more than three children including their own under-fives, nearly 40 per cent looked after more than three such children on their own (sometimes with the knowledge of a social worker); and three looked after seven, nine and ten children respectively, single handed. Only one-third provided what the investigators considered to be an adequate range of toys for children of this age, and nearly one-third provided toys which were 'very few in number, incomplete or broken playthings, so that in some cases the children had access only to a cardboard box of jumbled odds and ends'; these children had 'virtually nothing to do and would sit aimlessly rocking a small car back and forth, or repeatedly slot together a couple of bits of lego'. And though during the spring of 1976 the weather was unusually good, more than half the children had not been taken out the previous day, and nearly one-third had not been out during the previous week. Instead, they spent their days in a small space, three or four of them in a room often crowded with furniture and often physically unsafe (three had unguarded gas or paraffin heaters).

One of the claims made for childminding as a service is that the care it offers is 'domestic' rather than 'institutional': children, it is said, get the warm, intimate care of a single maternal figure rather than cool, impersonal, divided attention from several professionals. It is therefore a matter of particular social, as well as psychological, interest to read the account given of the observations made on the children during the course of the interviews. When one interviews a mother of a young child:

there is usually a great deal of interaction between mother and child during the course of an hour-long interview. At the outset, the child often sits close to the mother for several minutes, then gets down to play, returns to her, climbs on her knee, asks for food or to watch the television, or wants her to play. He shows her toys or cries for attention. In fact, the child's behaviour towards his mother impedes the flow of the interview. The mother responds to the child with caresses, talk, diversionary tactics or punishment. Sometimes she will break off the interview to meet his requirements and apologizes for the interruption. Throughout there are frequent interactions between the mother and the child, which suggest the strength of the underlying relationship. Many of these are initiated by the child himself, responding in a situation where his mother is giving her attention to a stranger. The mother, meanwhile, initiates less interaction in order, no doubt, to expedite the course of the interview. We found by contrast that the minders had virtually no difficulty in concentrating on the interview because the children were surprisingly undemanding of their attention. And not only did the minder not initiate interaction with the child, but almost invariably the child attempted little or no interaction with the minder. Hence it was possible to carry out an interview with a minder in the presence of three children aged between 18 months and 2½ years, without their approaching their minder at all. In fact, at the minder's the children struck us frequently as being rather inactive and strangely 'good'.

These remarks suggest that the quality of care provided by many childminders is very far from maternal; and the differences show up clearly in the quantitative records. Of 28 children observed both with the minder and with the mother no fewer than eleven made no overtures to the minder during a twenty-minute period, whereas every single child interacted at least once with his mother. And eleven children interacted more than five times with their mothers, but only two children did so with their minders. The authors say they found the difference very striking; I do, too. It helps explain why the children were on the whole backward in speech. But for this there is a more direct explanation: more than one-third of the minders did not speak to the child during the visit.

The picture we get from this study is of sad, passive children, of anxious, harrassed mothers, and hard-pressed minders insensitive to children's needs and distrustful of the mothers – who in turn are resentful of the minders. It was not all like that, of course, but it is clear that few of the minders provided care of a quality one would willingly allow for one's own children; and that is surely the test.

It would be easy but pharisaical to blame the minders, or the mothers, for their neglect of the children. Alternatively, they may no doubt all be regarded as victims of the system – a system that exploits and benefits from the labour of women but assumes little responsibility for their children. What *is* clear is that neither minders nor mothers have an easy time of it. The minders' hours are long, their pay abysmal. They have too much to do and too few resources to do it properly. The children come and go (one-quarter of the two-year-olds studied in this inquiry had had three or more placements with different minders, even though the sample was weighted to include as

many long-stay children as possible). The job lacks security and prestige, economic reward or short and easy hours. For both mothers and minders the satisfactions of life are mostly meagre and hard won. The support provided by the social work and health visitor service to these hard-pressed clients was, in a word, inadequate. One-fifth of the minders had not seen a social worker for more than six months; three-fifths had not been visited by a health visitor for more than six months. The general impression – though there were entirely praiseworthy exceptions – was of services which were inadequate, and of service personnel who were sometimes complacent when there were no grounds at all for complacency. Some appeared to regard the minder as their client. The real client – the real victim – is the child.

Mrs Mayall and Mrs Petrie, who write in restrained terms, describe much of what they saw as deplorable. No one could disagree with that judgment. But, it may be asked, how typical are the findings reported here, and what can be done to change the situation they describe? The authors deal with these issues; but it is perhaps worth discussing them further here since they raise questions of quite general importance for social inquiries which bear on social policy.

First the size of the sample. The study was on a small scale, being carried out alongside other work on pre-school children and their families, over a period of eighteen months. The object was not to undertake a wide-scale survey, but rather to make an intensive, qualitative study of how one group of young children are actually looked after. We cannot, from intensive studies, generalize to the country as a whole – but it is only from direct observation and inquiry that we can learn about what actually happens to children too young to tell us about it themselves.

How far we can generalize from a small inquiry is a more difficult question. More depends upon the typicality of the sample than on its size. In this instance we can say that from discussions with field workers with wide experience of childminding in working class areas in the major cities, from our other experience in the Thomas Coram Research Unit, and from what has been written about day care in France and the United States as well as in Britain, we think our findings probably give a fair picture of what childminding means to many children, working class mothers and minders. These findings do not overstate the gravity or frequency of the issues; if anything we think they are likely to err in understatement. The methods of interview and observation which Mrs Mayall and Mrs Petrie used have been widely employed in other social inquiries, both by ourselves and others; their reliability is easily checked and they are capable of replication.

The need for further inquiries is of course obvious. But clearly we already know, and not just as a result of this study, that the quality of

care which many thousands of young children are receiving is detrimental to their well-being, and probably to their future well-being also.

The recommendations as to policy which Mrs Mayall and Mrs Petrie make at the end of the report are, like all recommendations, matters of opinion. But they arise from the authors' wide experience, not just of visiting and reporting on 40 minded children, 39 daily minders and 28 mothers, but from much broader professional experience of young children and of the vicissitudes of family life and personal hardship. It is very easy for those who are comfortably off to complain that society is too poor to care for its children properly. To demand reasonable standards for all children is said to be asking for pie in the sky. However, this is not a view usually taken about, for example, the maternity services; or the child health services generally; or the quality of schooling; or road safety measures; or indeed any services which we or our families might use or have to use.

The implications of our current indifference to the manner in which very large numbers of young children are being looked after are, to say the least, disturbing. Very much more requires to be done about early child care than we are now doing, or planning to do. There is an immediate need for an expansion in services and an improvement in their quality. The allocation of resources is derisory and must be increased. And much more research of the sort that Mrs Mayall's and Mrs Petrie's pioneer study has begun is required.

Jack Tizard
Thomas Coram Research Unit
12 January, 1977

Part 1
The Research

Chapter 1
Scope of the Study

Childminding is an old-established, under-documented and under-researched form of pre-school care for the children of working mothers. Children have been minded in other people's homes while their mothers are at work since at least the onset of the Industrial Revolution. It has long been a way by which the poor of our society have been able to go to work without leaving their children unattended. At the same time it has provided some small extra income for the neighbour who performs the service. Dickens gives us a picture in *Our Mutual Friend* of one such neighbour in Mrs Betty Higden, an elderly laundress:

'Those are not his brother and sister?' said Mrs Boffin.
'Oh, dear no, ma'am. Those are Minders.'
'Minders?' The Secretary repeated.
'Left to be Minded, sir. I keep a Minding School. I can only take three, on account of the Mangle. But I love children and Fourpence a week is Fourpence . . .'

Childminding is still with us as one of the ways in which women can supplement their income without leaving their own home. In the Western world it seems to be far and away the most usual form of day care received by the children of working mothers (OECD, 1975). In England (March 1975) registered minders cared for 60,664 children, while local authority day nurseries looked after 26,098 children (DHSS, Personal Social Services Statistics, 1976), It is surprising, therefore, that such a widespread institution should have been so little studied. Even though of late it has received more publicity than it has ever done before, the critical attention that has been paid to it is still small. It has been proposed as a good low-cost solution to the needs of the growing number of young children whose mothers go out to work (Plowden, 1976). But there have also been disquieting descriptions of grossly inadequate childminding. Recently these have come from the work of Brian and Sonia Jackson (notably, Jackson, B., 1973), but there are also earlier studies which showed cause for concern (Gregory, 1969; and Yudkin, 1963). Nor is concern about minding as a pre-school service limited to this country. It seems that the care of other people's children, for money, by non-professionals in their own homes, presents difficulties which are both

widespread and common (Cournut and Blettner, 1976; Wagner and Wagner, 1976). To meet these difficulties schemes have been proposed, and in some cases tried out, to improve the service which minders offer (e.g. Jackson, 1974).

But without detailed study of what actually takes place at the childminder's, and of how minder and child relate to each other, there can be no real assessment of what minding may have to offer the pre-school child. Nor can informed decisions be made whether, and if so how, minding can be improved.

This study looks at a small number of minders in some detail, in an attempt to assess the quality of care they offer. It is, in part, an extension of the Thomas Coram Research Unit's (TCRU) interest in various kinds of pre-school provision, in the quality of care offered, and the mothers' satisfactions with what is available for their children. Data collected by the Unit in 'social interviews' with mothers of children under five in three areas of Inner London (over 350 mothers – 86 per cent of mothers in the areas), provide useful sources of comparison with our data. Our main aim was to analyse the strengths and deficiencies of minding and to suggest remedies and strategies for improvement where these seemed to be suggested by what we had observed.

The minding situation

The three participants involved in any minding transaction are the minder, the mother and the child, and we decided to look at minding as it affects each of them. (a) *The minder:* how does she spend her working day; what is her relationship with the minded child; what is her view of her job, its advantages and drawbacks; what is her relationship with the child's parents and with the council; has she received any training for the job; how important does she perceive training to be. (b) *The mother:* how does she arrange her working day and how satisfied is she with the arrangements she makes: her satisfaction with the minder; her preference, if any, for another form of child care for her child; her relationship with her child. (c) *The child:* how does he spend his day; his language development; how much he communicates with his mother and with his minder; his previous pre-school experience.

Method: interviews and observations

To obtain the information we needed we decided to use both interviews and systematic observations. We devised interview schedules for the mother and for the minder, and an assessment sheet on which to record both our observations and what we were told during the interviews. These schedules were tried out in pilot studies in two London boroughs and then revised in the light of our experience

with them. The reliability of the information and ratings was also tested by having both interviewers sit in on the same interview and record their impressions independently. Disagreements in the coding of information were later discussed, and conventions agreed upon to enable reliable judgments to be made about the behaviour of the participants whom we were studying.

Early in the pilot study it became apparent that the child's approaches to the minder during the interview offered important clues as to their relationship. So a system for noting the child's attempts at interaction with his minder was incorporated into the interviewer schedule. The same means of recording interactions initiated by the child was included in the mother's schedule so that we could compare his behaviour with both of these adults.

The *interview with the minder* aimed to get an account of 'yesterday', that is, the way in which the child and the minder spent the previous day together. It focused on what the minder and child actually did yesterday rather than on a report of her usual practice, although this was covered too. Many of the questions were designed to elicit her emotional response to the child and to his mother and to establish her view of the job, particularly with regard to child care and development (see Appendix 1, pp. 85–9).

The *assessment of the minder* depended on the interviewer's observation and judgment and of the childminder's own account. The assessment covered four areas: safety and hygiene, the child's socialization and cognitive development, the emotional climate, and the minder's view of her job. We were particularly interested in measures of interaction between minder and child (see Appendix 2, pp. 90–1).

The *interview with the mother* was substantially a shorter version of that used by us in the TCRU social survey interviews with mothers of under-fives. It gave us information about her employment, the length of her day, her desire to continue working and her satisfaction with the way her days were arranged. We also asked about worries and problems and the help she had with them. We tried to find out what the mother knew of how her child spent his day at the minder's and how satisfied she was with the minder. She was invited to compare the current situation with previous arrangements made for the child and his brothers and sisters. We also asked how she coped with her day-to-day responsibilities for household chores, caring for the children, and going out to work. We enquired about her satisfaction in these spheres and about her relationship with the minded child. (See Appendix 3, pp. 92–6).

The state of *the child's language development* was assessed by using the Reynell Developmental Language Scales. Permission to administer the test was obtained from the mother, and the test was

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carried out at the minder's on a return visit. This afforded us scope for further conversation with the minder and assessment of her attitudes and practice.

The sample

We proposed initially to obtain a sample of children who had been with the same minder for at least twelve months, and were aged two to three years; where the children and their parents were non-immigrant and where the minders, too, were non-immigrant and registered. This was in order to avoid grossly deficient non-registered minders, and so that we could observe and assess stable situations of child care, without problems arising from cultural and language differences. To this end we approached two Outer London boroughs for help in locating such minders. One declined, on the grounds that such selection might appear discriminatory to their immigrant minders. A second gave us their complete list of minders, with some suggestions as to who would meet our criteria; in the event this information was so faulty that the time needed to visit each minder to establish whether she fitted our criteria seemed disproportionate to the numbers we could obtain by such a method. However, we did complete two interviews and assessments with minders in this second borough. These women would not, however, put us in touch with the mothers of the minded children.

We then approached two Inner London boroughs and again obtained lists of minders. In one of these boroughs record-keeping and administration was centralized. In the other the different areas maintained their own systems, so that they had varying degrees of accuracy in their record-keeping. Some local authority workers knew all their minders and all the minded children personally, but others had little knowledge beyond that the minder had met standards for registration. One area team, for instance, gave a list of eighteen minders: eight turned out not to be minding, and of these three had moved out of the area; four had children too young or too old. So only six of the eighteen had children in the right age group. Two factors would seem especially important in promoting this undesirable variation in standards of record-keeping: the rapid turnover of children in this form of provision, and the fact that local authorities are not required to keep records of the numbers of children currently attending each minder (and in some cases have little or no clerical assistance to do so). It should also be noted that while this lack of accurate records is time-consuming for researchers it is even more frustrating for mothers who are endeavouring, often at short notice, to find a place for a young child with the aid of a local authority list of registered minders.

From the two Inner London boroughs we eventually obtained nine

minders who met our criteria. However, before we reached this point we realized that long placements and non-immigrant status were not common features in childminding in these localities. Because of pressing time, therefore, we decided to include *any* minder who had a child, of whatever ethnic origin, aged between two and three. With these reduced criteria we were able to obtain a list of 37 minders in all. Of these, five did not wish to be interviewed and one was not available until after the period set aside for interviewing was over. This left us with 31 minders from the two Inner London boroughs.

The mothers of study children interviewed were those whose names and addresses had been obtained from the minder. At two minders', there were two children who met our criteria; all four of these were included and their mothers interviewed. Among the 'mothers' is one father – the caretaker in that case of the child. In all, 28 mothers were seen. The average length of their children's present placement was just under twelve months.

The differences in the numbers of minders and mothers result from the fact that in one case the mother did not wish to be interviewed, and in two others the address of the mothers was not known (one of these was evicted before her interview and had moved from the area). One child changed minders in the course of the study and so for him two minders' interviews were completed (but only one mother's). A further minder looked after a child very much on a part-time basis, so we excluded the mother's interview on the grounds that our study was concerned with full-day care.

Observation and assessment

Observation and assessment of the minder's practice and attitudes was made in every case. In one case, however, it was impossible to observe the interaction between minder and child. Because of this, no matching observation was possible with the mother. We have therefore 27 observations of the child's interaction with his minder and with his mother. We also decided to include in our sample six minders with a child of the relevant age whom we had interviewed in a pilot study; their names had been given us by one of the two Outer London boroughs as representative of minders in the area. In all, we have analysed material from 39 minders' interviews.

The *Reynell Developmental Language Scales* were given to the children with the mothers' consent. All the mothers agreed to let their child do the test. However, one child was unwilling to co-operate. So 27 Reynell tests were carried out.

Summary

It will be clear that this field of study is difficult and that to obtain a complete picture of each minder, mother and child is time-consuming.

We have this complete picture (minder's and mother's interview and the Reynell test on the study child) in 25 cases. We have analysable material on 40 children (25 boys, 15 girls), 39 minders and 28 mothers; and 27 completed Reynell tests. (Totals of cases enumerated in tables in the text vary because in some cases information on a given point was not obtained.)

Additional data

We have also considered at some points relevant data from the main Thomas Coram Research Unit social interviews with mothers whose two to three year-olds were being minded at the time of interview; eight cases in all. Minders were used by a very small proportion of mothers in our three areas: in the first year of interviewing only 21 out of 454 children under five were currently going to minders.

Chapter 2
The Sample

The minders

The sample of minders which we eventually obtained seemed to us to be in many respects a favoured one. We saw no minders living in bad housing conditions and for the most part their accommodation was clean and well kept. Nearly a third of them (12) had had some work experience relevant to childminding. They had worked directly with children in private homes, day nurseries, children's homes or children's wards in hospitals. One, as well as working in a children's home, had also done a social work preliminary course and another had done one year of a three-year nursery teacher's training course. In addition, more than two-thirds of the minders (27) had contact with a special social worker who devoted himself or herself to childminder support or training. Because of this quite a large proportion (60 per cent of the total sample) had taken part in some sort of training scheme. These included courses of talks and films, discussion groups, regular minders' meetings, and a drop-in playgroup for minders with their children which the organizers saw as providing informal education and training. We were able to talk to some of these workers, to visit a drop-in centre and to attend a minder's meeting. It seemed to us that there was a different approach to minders from area to area in our sample, according to resources and policy. All, any one, some, or even none of the following were to be met: moral support and encouragement; the provision of basic equipment or of a grant towards it; informal means of education such as drop-in centres and news-sheets; and more structured courses of meetings and talks. Much of this activity probably took place in response to the recent publicity about inadequate childminders. The schemes were funded variously by the local authority, by an Urban Aid grant or by a charitable organization. However, the policy concerning the provision of support for childminders was not uniform in the four London boroughs in which we carried out our research. One local authority offered no help to minders at all, two had a policy which applied equally to all parts of the borough, while the fourth had a scheme operating in some social service areas and not in others.

A substantial number of our minders, then, had relevant child-care experience or were receiving local authority training and support. Some fell into both categories. Nearly all of them were mothers who had brought up or were still bringing up their own children. Just under half had a pre-school child or children and combined looking after their own child with minding other people's. Most of the others had children who were at school or were grown up now. There were also three minders (two of these were unmarried) who had no children. The minders' ages ranged from 21 to 56 years with rather more of them under than over 40 (mean age=38·7, standard deviation 10·9). As for previous work experience (Table 1), four minders had never been out to work and the rest were fairly evenly divided between those who had been employed in manual work (51 per cent) and those who had had non-manual jobs (49 per cent). Most of the minders came from the British Isles. Seven were from the West Indies and two from Northern Europe.

Table 1: Minders' previous employment

		Number of minders
Registrar General's classification of occupations –		
Social class	II	7
	III non-manual	10
	III manual	7
	IV	7
	V	4
never previously employed		4
		N=39

The mothers and children

We obtained the names and addresses of the mothers in our sample from the minder, at the time of the first interview. They were the mothers of the 'study' children. In fact, while they will subsequently be referred to as 'mothers' one of them (as mentioned in the previous chapter) was the father of the child. In this case the mother had left the family some months before, and social services had put the father in touch with a minder to care for the child while he worked. In three other cases the child lived in a single parent family where the mother was not supported by a co-habitee or husband. We saw 28 mothers altogether. As far as our sample is concerned, minders do offer a local service. Most of the mothers (20) and children lived within easy walking distance of the minder, although one of them made an hour's journey by car before dropping the child on her way to work. In this case the parents had settled their child at the minder's before they had moved out of London: since they were still travelling to the same jobs in Central London they dropped the child off each day

on their way. Three mothers and their children had a walk of between fifteen and thirty minutes; one travelled for a similar time by public transport, while two mothers had car journeys of less than a quarter of an hour.

The mothers were a much younger group of women than the minders. Most of them were in their twenties; two were aged 19 and eight were between 30 and 36. (Range: 19–36 years, mean=26·3 years, standard deviation=4·6.) Again, in comparison with the minders, proportionately fewer (16 out of 28) came from the British Isles. The rest came from the West Indies (5), Africa (5), the Philippines (1) and Mauritius (1). Most of the mothers (18) had only one child, seven had two children and only three had more than two children (having three, four and five respectively).

Of the men they were married to, or living with, three were unemployed, five were students, four were engaged in non-manual work and the rest (12) in manual occupations (Table 2).

Table 2: Mother's husband's job

	unemployed	*students*	*I*	*II*	*III non-manual*	*III manual*	*IV*	*V*
Number of husbands	3	5	1	2	1	8	2	2
								N=24

The large proportion of students among the husbands all came from the immigrant group. In these cases the wife was supporting the husband's education and the family hoped to return to its homeland when the husband qualified.

Table 3: Mother's job

	I	*II*	*III non-manual*	*III manual*	*IV*	*V*
Number of mothers	2	6	15	1	3	0
						N=27

All of the mothers were at work, but the one father who was sole guardian of the child became unemployed in the course of the research. 23 of the mothers were employed in non-manual work. The large proportion of mothers who fall into the III non-manual group (15) were doing the sort of work which is fairly typical of working women in London; they were clerks, shop assistants and shorthand typists. The mothers' work took them away from home for a full working day (30 hours or more per week). All but two of the 27 were out of the home for eight hours or more and twelve of them were away for ten or more hours.

Table 4: Absence and sharing of basic amenities (i.e. kitchen, bath, WC, hot water)

Number of families	*Number of absent amenities*
2	2
2	1
	Number of shared amenities
2	4
3	2
4	1
	N=28

Nearly all of the mothers and children we saw lived in rented flats or rooms. Many of their dwellings were less than adequate on one criterion or another. As Table 4 shows, about half the families lacked, or had to share, basic amenities. Six families lived more than 1·5 persons to the room and sixteen had no access to a yard or garden.

Chapter 3
Minder's History and Experience of Childminding

The interview with the minder took place usually by appointment, after an initial visit to her. At this first contact the interviewer explained who she was, that she had obtained the minder's name from the local authority worker and that our purpose in coming to see the minder was in order to hear how the children spent their day and about the minder's experiences of and opinions on minding. We made it clear that we wanted the interview to take place at a time when the study child was up and about, so that we could see him in action. We then asked for an appointment to carry out the interview. If we were asked in straightaway, we gratefully accepted the invitation. If not, as was much more usual, we returned on the agreed date. Interview questions are set out in Appendix 1 below, pp. 85–9.

The first half of our interview with the minder was concerned mainly with her practice as a minder, though it was revealing about her relationships with both child and parent, especially on crucial issues of feeding, toilet-training and play. The minder's practice, in so far as it concerned how the child spent his day, is described in chapter 4, and our findings on her relationship with the child are given in chapter 6.

The second half of the interview was composed of questions about her work history, her experience of minding, and her views about the job (Q. 39 *et seq.*). We asked the minders why they had taken on the job; how long they had been doing it; what they thought minders should know if they were to do the job well; whether they enjoyed their work; and how long they intended to go on with it. The underlying aim of these questions was to get an account by the minder of her approach to the job, to find out how far she saw it as child care rather than merely as minding or caretaking, and to learn from her about her relationships with parents and the local authority. This part of the interview also allowed the minder to talk with confidence on a subject she felt she knew about. The form and style of the interview changed from what might have seemed a rather probing inquiry about her care of the child to a discussion on equal terms about a job. We will start by giving our findings on this second part of the interview.

Reasons for minding children

Minders' stated reasons for starting minding (Q. 42) are given in Table 5. They are included here only to indicate how few minders actually mentioned interest in child-care work as a reason for taking on the job (five out of 39). Answers to this kind of question are likely to be superficial, and respondents may well emphasize their own personal commitments rather than their work interests. It is remarkable, however, how few minders claimed that they started minding because of an interest in children's welfare or development. (A similar, though vaguer, set of replies was obtained on why they were still doing the job.) Two of the depressed minders had actually

Table 5: Reasons for starting work as a minder

Reasons given	*Number of minders*
ill health	3
boredom, loneliness and/or depression	6
interest in child-care work	5
helping out friend/relation	4
has own child under 5 years	7
needs/wants to earn money	5
other (including combinations of above)	9
	N=39

been advised by their GP to mind as an antidote to depression. Three others were too ill to go out to work. Another said she started minding because she did not want to work during the day. The prevailing impression received from the answers to these questions (Q.s 42–48) was of a casual approach to a job which provided a bit of pocket money while fitting in with the minder's main preoccupations: her domestic commitments and personal situation.

Table 6: Length of time minders had worked at the job

Years	under 2	2 – 4·11	5 – 9·11	10 – 14	20+
No. of minders	5	17	10	6	1
					N=39

Table 6 shows that just over half the minders had done the job for less than five years. (A third had been minding for less than three years.) This suggests, not only, perhaps, that many were minding while they were at home with a pre-school child, but, more important, that there is considerable turnover in the work-force. If these women need or want to earn a reasonable wage, they go out to work – and local authority workers told us that they were currently losing more

minders than they were registering. The story is corroborated by mothers: in the present inquiry, and also in our survey interviews undertaken during the Thomas Coram Research Unit study of a larger sample of mothers and young children (Table 23), one of the principal reasons given by mothers for moving their child from a minder was that the minder had 'gone back to work'. Such instability in the work force is not, of course, in the child's best interests.

Table 7: Intentions about continuing to work as a minder

	Number of minders
Have no present intentions of stopping:	27
Have definite plans for going out to work in the near future:	4
Intend to stop when own child starts at pre-school provision or primary school:	8
	N=39

The information given in Table 7 is included to show what the minders' views were about continuing to mind. Many of them had not thought about giving up minding, or had put off a decision until the present child had left. But nearly a third intended either to go back to work soon (and had definite plans for this), or to go back to work when their own child started at pre-school or primary school. The information given here is, however, probably of less significance than the figures given in Table 6, which shows how long in fact they had been minding.

Conditions of Work

Table 8: Length of minders' working day, measured from time of arrival of first to time of departure of last child

Number of hours	*Number of minders*	
9 or less	18	
10	14	
11	7	
Mean=9·5 hours	Standard deviation=1·5	N=39

As Table 8 shows, minders work a long day, over half of them working for ten or eleven hours. When these figures are seen in relation to the very low rate of pay (Table 9), they point to an exceedingly low rate per hour, one which would be totally unacceptable in any other job.

In spite of this, two-thirds of our minders expressed satisfaction with pay: an acceptance no doubt of the low status of the job and, often, a view that the children are no trouble and do not need much attention (Table 21). In addition, several minders said they could not

Table 9: Amount paid to minder per child per week

£	*Number of minders*
4	2
5–7	35
10	1
other	1
	N=39

Note: In almost all cases, the minder provides all the child's food out of this amount.

ask the mother for more, since the mother needed the money she earned. However, the minder's response to low pay is often to 'over-mind' (that is, to take on more than the permitted number of children), and it is then the needs of the child that suffer from too thinly spread attention from the minder.

Table 10: Minder's satisfaction with pay received

satisfied	26
dissatisfied	12
do not know	1
	N=39

Nearly a third of the minders were dissatisfied with the pay. They pointed to the high and rising cost of food, and particularly of heating, as well as to wear and tear on wallpaper, paint and furniture. Toys, significantly, were much less frequently mentioned as an expense: it was common practice for the children just to use whatever was in the house; the toys were often left over from their own children's use, although in some cases minders reported that they preferred the minded children not to have access to their own childrens' toys. Dissatisfaction with pay is one aspect of a very general conflict with parents. We shall next consider the relationship between minders and parents.

Minders' relationship with parents

In our view, it is of the utmost importance to the well-being and steady progress of the child that the relationship between the two (or three) adults concerned with his day-to-day care should be a good one. If the mother feels able to settle the child in gradually, if she can spend time sitting and chatting with the minder, if in turn the minder feels able to discuss developmental or behavioural problems, or management matters (feeding and toilet-training help), with the mother so that they may work as partners in a consistent way for the benefit of the child, then the child is likely to feel more

secure, more at home, with the minder; he is likely to form a more trusting relationship with her and to feel that the two parts of his life form a satisfactory whole.

This happy state of affairs was very rarely encountered. Instead, our interviews with minders and mothers gave us much anecdotal evidence of distrust, conflict, and absence of co-operation between the two. Some children were reported as being toilet-trained by two different methods – and even more were being rigorously trained at the minder's (for her own convenience) and not being trained at all at home, to the mutual dissatisfaction of all parties. A child would refuse to eat his mid-day meal at the minder's, who would then (perhaps to protect herself) not even tell the mother, let alone discuss it with her. Many minders discouraged parents from spending time talking – at the end of the day the minder wants to revert to her other roles: her husband and children need to be fed; she wants the premises to be seen as a private home, not as a child-care establishment. The mother in turn may well feel unwanted, obliged quickly to pick up the child and go.

We gave every opportunity for each of the minders to refer to conversations with the mother (especially Q.s 6, 37, 38); and also picked up any hint of difficulty she had had with the child, prompting her to discuss how she had dealt with it. Many minders, however, did not see any general need for frequent discussions about the child: 16 out of the 38 (42 per cent) had not talked with the mother about the child in the previous week. There were exceptions: one mother explained how she arranged her working day so that she had ten minutes in the morning and the evening in which she and the minder could sit and chat to each other. There were a few others who said they had formed a friendship with the minder.

A large number of the minders (25 out of 39, or 64 per cent) said that they had at some time in the past had difficulties with parents. This provides a further indication that the job has many difficulties: many of the anecdotes were to do with non-payment, conflict over rates of pay, payment for holiday times or in case of sickness; or they were to do with mutual distrust or misunderstanding, often on child management. Some of these difficulties arose out of cultural differences and disagreements.

One-third of the minders had had at some time to ask a mother to remove a child. Given the transitory nature of many minder placements, minders are likely over the course of time to be faced with children who present behavioural difficulties or who appear to be disturbed (Table 22). The minder is almost certainly less well equipped professionally than most child-care personnel to help the child, and she has no one on hand to discuss the problem with. Her response to the situation may be simply to reject the child, since her

view of the job is unlikely to include helping a difficult child. The child in question is unlikely to benefit from a series of such brief unhappy placements. On the other hand, minders did give some instances where local authority workers had given sustained help to a minder, and where minder and child eventually settled down together.

Minders' attitudes to childminding as a job

The items listed in Section D of our Assessment Sheet (Appendix 2, p. 91) were scored by the interviewer with reference to information given by the minder in all parts of the interview. We thought it was important that a minder who cares for a child all day long should, in however unformulated a way, see her function as in part concerned with the development of the child (D. 38). Credit was given to any minder who, for instance, spoke of helping the child achieve skills, who saw play or television programmes as possible learning situations, who suggested that playing with the child, talking with him or answering his questions were helpful to the child. A few minders expressed their views more theoretically. On a very generous rating, 16 out of 39 (42 per cent) scored positively on this item.

As has previously been contended, we view the relationship between the two caring adults as crucial to the well-being of the child; in particular, one would wish that the adults' relationship should be oriented to the child's needs. We asked about this (Q.s 6 and 37), and in scoring the answers (D.39) also took account of any positive remarks made in any part of the interview, our particular interest being in whether the minder communicated with the mother and expressed the view that she and the mother were engaged in a co-operative effort in looking after the child. 14 out of 39 (36 per cent) scored positively here; 25 (64 per cent) scored negatively.

During our pilot interviews we several times met with expressions of general hostility towards parents of minded children. We thought it useful therefore to include an item on this in our Assessment (D. 40). We did not ask minders for expressions of hostility to parents, either in general or in particular, although we did ask (Q. 53) if they had ever had any trouble with parents. Most of the minders expressed hostile feelings in anecdotes about particular situations (toilet-training, pay, pay during holidays and so on). We scored minders as being hostile in general only if their attitudes to the parents of minded children indicated disparagement and disapproval of them as a group, or type. And on this criterion almost a quarter (10 out of 39) were rated as generally hostile. For example, one minder said: 'I go back to when I had my first children – I had far less money than these parents do. It's (that is, going out to work) for their cars and their petrol.' And another: 'Some of these mums are aggressive: they have no patience with children; they're spiteful.'

Many minders, by contrast, expressed sympathy with the problems, particularly economic problems, of young families, and felt that mothers had made a reasonable choice in electing to work and have the child minded.

As to the other three items scored under 'Minder's attitude to childminding', all but three of the minders focused very well on the children rather than repeatedly bringing the conversation back to their own situation (D. 41). As a group they seemed well able to separate problems in their own lives from a discussion whose centre was the children and the job.

Item D. 42, concerned with valuing non-physical means of controlling children, was, with hindsight, perhaps mistakenly conceived: it proved difficult to score because the majority of the minders maintained that the children in their care did not do anything which required control or disciplinary measures. 'He's never naughty, never any trouble' was a common reply to the questions on the child's behaviour (Q.s 19, 20, 21, 31, 32). Only two (out of 38) minders reported that the child was naughty yesterday; twelve (out of 37) that the child ever got her down. Overall, we thought that seven of the minders valued physical punishment over other forms of control. The question why it should be that children aged from two to three were apparently not naughty, not wearing and exhausting, is considered in connection with the minder's relationship with the child (chapter 6).

On the final item (D. 43), whether the minder could get in touch with the parent in case of emergency, all but two of the minders were able to produce the work-time address or telephone number of the child's parent. Local authority emphasis on this has had good effects. Some minders had an efficiently kept book in which data on each child were kept; in some cases these books had been provided by the local authority. We should note, however, that two of the minders did not know where the mother lived. In these cases the local authority workers did not know either. It is clearly desirable for the minder to have the mother's home address so that she may communicate with her out of work, in case of emergency.

Two other unfortunate findings: firstly, we did not make any mention of race in our interview schedule, but were treated to many unsolicited anecdotes with a racist bias. We rated three of the 39 minders as unequivocally racist in their attitudes. Secondly, three of the minders admitted that they left the children alone and unattended, either in order to shop, or to fetch their own child from primary school. One of these had told the mother that she did this and the mother had felt unable to make more than a token protest, since in other respects she was pleased with the minder's care of her child and did not want to lose the place.

Table 11: Minder's mean scores (according to items 33–37, 12–14, 38–40 on Assessment Sheet, Appendix 2) with reference to relevant work experience and training for childminding

	Cb 33–37	*B 12–14*	*D 38–40*	*Total*	
rel. wrk. + training	3·3	1·8	2·2	7·3	N=6
rel. wrk. + no training	3·5	1·6	1·3	6·5	N=6
no rel. wrk. + training	2·3	1·2	1·2	4·7	N=9
no rel. wrk. + no training	3·1	1·4	1·4	5·9	N=16

The minder's positive behaviour to the child during the interview (Cb 33–37), the amount she spoke to and played with the child (B 12–14), and her attitudes to the job of childminding (D 38–40) are considered in more detail in chapter 6. However, we thought it of interest to record (Table 11) that the twelve minders who had previously worked with children scored higher on these eleven counts than those who had not previously done relevant work, irrespective of any training for childminding received from the local authority. The finding is not however statistically significant. (It should also be noted that of the 25 minders who had not previously worked with children, the group who had not received any form of training from the local authority for their minding work scored slightly higher than those who had received some training: it would seem that on grounds of current practice and attitudes there was little to choose between the two groups; the small difference was not statistically significant.) This study would repay more detailed study. On the face of it, one might expect someone who had worked alongside other people in a child-care job to have a solidly based, continuously reinforced child-care orientation which she could carry over into the minding situation. There may be an instructive contrast here with the woman who attends a course of lectures or informal meetings, and then returns to work alone in her own home, with support and encouragement much less readily and continuously available to her.

Summary

It appears from our findings that minding is a job often done for a short period of time, for grossly inadequate pay. It is a job which demands a good relationship with the parent but which is so structured as to make this difficult. It is a job done in the midst of a welter of other commitments, by a woman on her own with little encouragement or motivation to do the job well.

Chapter 4
How the Children Spent the Day

We have described at the beginning of chapter 3 how we obtained our interview with the minder and what its aims and subject matter were. We now go on to describe what we heard from the minder about the child's day with her, and what we observed during the course of our visit to her.

Numbers of children

Minders are normally registered for not more than three children, including their own under-fives. On the day of the interview, however, thirteen of the 39 minders were looking after more than three children, excluding their own under-fives (and of these thirteen, six had six or more children in their care). Table 12 indicates the position when the minder's own under-fives are taken into account.

Table 12: Number of children aged less than five present on day of interview (including minder's own under-fives)

Number of children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
Number of minders	2	8	13	5	3	3	1	1	1

N=37

Note: In two further cases, where there were respectively five and six children present, the presence of a helper reduced the child:adult ratio to 3:1 or less.

Fourteen of the minders were looking after more than three children under five years. Some of these minders indicated that the local authority was aware of the position and in some cases had asked the minder to take on an extra child or two; some of the minders, on the other hand, were uneasy about admitting to the presence of their extra children and made a variety of excuses to justify their presence. (However, these extra children were often there when we arrived for the second interview.)

The child's day

One of our principal concerns was to look at how children spend their day at the minders'; and information on this was derived from the

minder's account of the child's activities during the day previous to the interview. For items like outings, we asked for details about the week previous to the interview. We also observed what the child was doing during the interview and what toys were available to him; and we noted any interaction between the minder and the child. (This interaction is discussed in chapter 6.)

The children had a long day: 33 out of 40 (82 per cent) spent eight or more hours at the minder's, and eight of these spent ten or eleven hours there. These hours reflected in general the length of the mother's working day, although in some cases fathers either took the child to the minder or picked him up.

As far as physical care is concerned, the children seemed to eat enough food, according to the minder's account; the pattern seemed to be a snack in mid-morning, cooked dinner, a snack in mid- to late-afternoon. Judged by the minders' account of what the children ate 'yesterday', the children seemed to eat well. Almost all the children had a sleep: minders tended to use this time to do housework, or for resting themselves. One minder who worked as a cleaner night and morning (22½ hours a week), said she settled down with the children for a sleep in the afternoon. In this case, as in several others, the child's mother later pointed out to the interviewer that if and when the child had a rest depended on the minder's convenience, not on the child's need. This mother took back home at the end of the day a child who then stayed up and about till all hours and was tired next morning. She had complained to the minder, but had been told that the minder needed an afternoon rest herself and found it easiest to settle all the children down with her.

Where the children spent the day

The children typically spent their day indoors, with brief excursions in some cases. The minder's housing is an important factor in the quality of the child's day. With a few exceptions, the minders fell into two roughly equal categories on this: those who had post-war council flats, and those in small nineteenth-century houses. The flats were mainly newish, centrally heated; and often the living room was not distinctly separated from the kitchen by a wall or door, but only by a breakfast bar or room divider; in some cases the living-room and kitchen were completely open-plan. The children spent their day in this linked space, and were in and out of the kitchen where the minder was busy at the sink and cooker; they had their sleep on a sofa or in one of the bedrooms. About the same number of minders were in small houses, where typically the small front room was a parlour for best occasions and certainly not used by children. They were in the back room which was heated by gas or a paraffin stove, and this room adjoined a (usually) separate kitchen: in these houses

the children usually had access to an enclosed back yard. Altogether 26 (out of 39 children) had access to a safe, enclosed, outside space. However, some minders are cautious about letting their charges play outside: eight of the 26 children who had access to safe outside space did not play out 'yesterday', although not only was the weather remarkably clement last spring (1976), but we did also make allowances for such dull days as there were! In our view, play space for a child is not safe if he has unrestricted access to a busy cooking-stove, although as far as we know local authorities do not take this aspect of safety into consideration when registering a minder. In 19 out of 39 cases the play-space was unsafe according to our criteria; these include three cases where an unguarded gas or paraffin heater was used. In one case, the minder had a gas fire with a safe guard provided by the local authority, but she was using a paraffin heater (unguarded) because, she said, a gas heater cost about £3 a week to run. Since she was minding only one child for £5 a week her case provides a striking illustration of the dilemmas in which minders find themselves.

The children spent their day in a small space, three or four of them in a room often crowded with furniture. They were often restricted by the minder from running, climbing and investigating; it was after all her dwelling, her carpets, wallpaper and furniture. We felt, too, that many of the children were required by the dictates of the space itself to confine their movements. Eleven of the children spent their day confined to one room for eating, sleeping and playing, and this figure includes only those cases where there was more than one child present. In our opinion, at least seven of the children (18 per cent) were spending their day in grossly overcrowded conditions – too many children in a very small space. At one minder's, for instance, seven children were spending their day in a small back room, not more than 9-feet square, which contained two sofas (which they slept on), a table and three dining-room chairs. This was a minder who said she never took the children out, and when asked if they played out yesterday said, 'I don't trust this sort of weather'. The interviewer noted that 'yesterday' was a brilliantly sunny day.

The children got very little change from this restricted environment (Table 13). Over half of our sample did not go out 'yesterday'; and nearly a third did not go out in the last week (five working days). The vast majority of outings were to accompany the minder and other children to and from nursery schools, play-groups and primary schools, usually within five minutes or so of the minder's home. Eight had been to a public playground or playgroup in the last week. (Most of these playgroups were run by local authority departments for minders' charges, sometimes with an associated drop-in centre for the minders themselves.)

Table 13: Outings: numbers of children who went out with the minder, i.e. off the premises, according to minder

Number of children	*'yesterday'*	*in last week*
did go out	18	27
did not go out	21	12
		N=39

Toys and Play

Our information on toys was derived from watching the children at play during the interview; and from asking what the child's favourite toys and play-activities were, and what toys were available to him. As can be seen from the Assessment Sheet, Section B, we scored minders on the presence and availability to the children of toys (Appendix 2). We devised a number of categories: soft toys, toys for imaginative play; crayons, paper, and so on; books; building and construction toys, involving fine motor skills; medium-wheel and miniature transport toys; and riding and climbing toys, for gross motor play. In our opinion, someone looking after children of this age all day should provide at least one toy in each of these categories. So, for instance, the presence of one teddy-bear or one children's book was enough for the minder to score on that item. As Table 14 indicates, just under half the minders were providing four or fewer categories of toy; and only slightly over a quarter provided at least one toy in all categories.

Table 14: Number of children having access to various types of toy according to observation plus minder's report (Assessment B, 20–26)

Number of children	*Number of types of toy*
9	7
7	6
5	5
18	4 or fewer
	N=39

It seemed to us that on grounds of quantity, quality and variety slightly over a third of the minders were providing a good range of toys for the relevant age-group – plenty of toys, in good condition, easily available to the child, and allowing for varieties of play – for instance, constructive, imaginative, and home-making kinds of play. By the same standards, slightly under a third were providing very poor toys: very few in number, incomplete or broken playthings, so that in some cases the children had access only to a cardboard box of jumbled plastic odds and ends. In these cases, the children had virtually nothing to do and would sit aimlessly rolling a small car back and forth, or repeatedly slot together a couple of bits of lego. It is worth pointing out here that not only are good, durable toys

expensive, they are also not easily obtainable: 'good' toy shops are few and far between. And as one minder pointed out, the woman looking after young children all day, with other domestic commitments as well, has little opportunity to get to good shops and see what is available. She suggested that one of the jobs of the local authority should be to offer advice and help on this. Some authorities do issue lists of age-appropriate toys, and some make suggestions about using domestic articles as toys, too. In many cases where the toys were good, local authority provision of a toy library (either a van visiting the minder, or a library at a local authority drop-in centre, welfare clinic or office) was having a good effect on the number and standard of toys. In at least two of our areas, the local authority was also providing paint and paper, which are expensive items needing frequent replacement.

In order to fill in further the picture of what sort of play the child engaged in, and also in this case to find out something of the minder's attitude to messy play which is likely to disarrange her premises, we asked whether the children were ever allowed to play with water, sand, or paint and, if so, whether they had done so 'yesterday' (Q. 12). Only eleven of the children had in fact been allowed to, 'yesterday'. Some minders recognized that children liked this sort of play, but discouraged it all the same; some said that the local authority drop-in centre was especially useful in providing such opportunities for the children; others firmly said that they didn't hold with that sort of play.

As to the amount of attention the children received from the minder as part of their daily experience, our impression is that it is not very much. Quantifying this was difficult, because we had to rely on the minder's account. Towards the end of the interview we asked her how she managed to fit her own work in, and many minders explained that they did their housework in the morning, and that they also had to spend quite a lot of time cooking, washing up and clearing up for the minded children. We also asked specifically if the minder had sat down 'yesterday' with the children and told them a story or played with them; 23 (out of 39) had and 16 had not. We also observed, where possible, whether the minder initiated play, or encouraged or suggested developments of the child's play during the hour or so we were there. (Making sure the child is happily employed is usually a major consideration when two adults are hoping to talk to each other in the presence of under-threes.) Only six (of the 36) did so.

General points

Some more general points can relevantly be made here, and particularly in order to stress that we would not wish necessarily to

blame minders for their standards of child care. Perhaps we should first stress again that most minders look after the children in the midst of their own expensive furniture and fittings. On the whole the minders we saw did not live in spacious accommodation with rooms to spare. It is noteworthy in this connection that very few of the minders had been able to set aside a playroom – which would have had consequent benefit to the children.

Secondly, minders work a long day, with no breaks (Table 8). On average in our sample, they worked a 9½ hour day. They also have the chores and responsibilities of a housewife and, usually, mother to fit in. In these circumstances it is not surprising if minders spend some of the day working at the service aspects of life at home with children; indeed, unless they are very highly motivated towards child care and education, they may spend very little of the day with the children.

Thirdly, minders are looking after more young children than most mothers do. It is rare nowadays for a mother to have three children under five years; two at most, and then only for a short number of years, is usual. Being at home with young children is known to be stressful, tiring and time consuming. (Brown et al., 1975; Oakley, 1974.) It is also a lonely job: child care under home circumstances is quite a different matter from child care in, say, a day nursery, where several adults share the job, freed from the domestic service work associated with children. It is not surprising, then, if minders do not throw themselves continuously and enthusiastically into the extremely strenuous task of child care. This subject will be considered at greater length in the next chapter.

Fourthly, minders' pay is atrocious. Out of it they feed the children and provide any treats and expeditions; they have to heat the rooms used by the children and pay for wear and tear to the property and furnishings. It is not surprising if buying and replacing toys and other equipment comes low on the list of priorities. (See chapter 3 above, conditions of work, pp. 29–30.)

Chapter 5
The Language Competency of the Minded Child

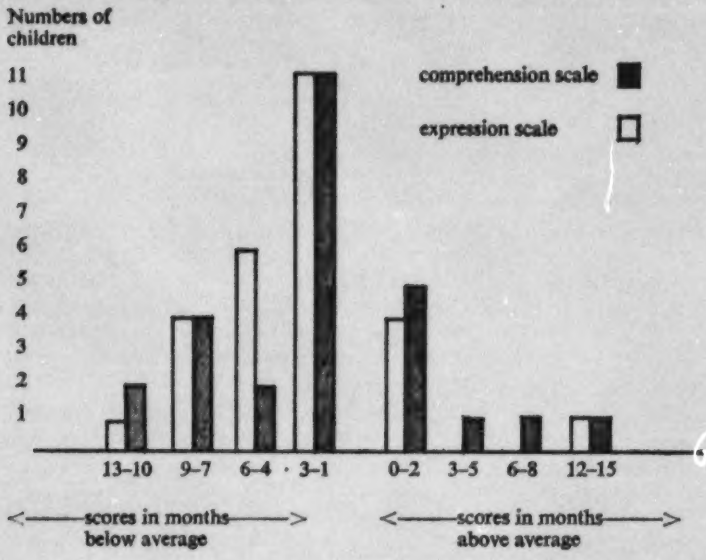
The preceding chapter indicates something of the quality of the child's experience while he was in the minder's care. It was because of similar findings in our pilot study that we thought we should look at the child's competency in language. Between the ages of two and three years a child's ability to understand what people say and to make himself understood in speech is developing fast. It seemed to us, however, that many of the children we saw were not speaking well for their age nor, indeed, were they speaking very much at all. We were reminded of Stewart-Prince's work (1967) and the subdued, silent children he describes. He thought that multiple caretaking and grossly inadequate care played some part in the children's condition.

For these reasons we decided to test the children's language, and chose to use the Reynell Language Development Scales. This test was developed as an assessment tool to test children's ability to understand the language of others and to express themselves in language. Consequently, it has two parts: a comprehension scale and an expressive scale. It is meant for use with children up to five years. We decided to use this test because it is one which children enjoy doing, because it is age-appropriate and because it has the two scales just referred to. It involves the use of attractive little toys and real objects. For the most part the children of the sample seemed to like doing the test and enjoyed playing with the toys very much – strikingly so in fact. This is very understandable considering the relatively poor toys available at some of the minders'. The tests were carried out at the minder's home at the time of the second visit to her.

It may be seen that most children scored below their age level on one or both scales – in fact only four were average or above on both scales. On average, the children were 2·9 months below normal on the expressive scale and 2·3 months below normal on the comprehension scale (see Fig. 1).

The results of the Reynell test are normally expressed as 'standard' scores, that is, in terms of the extent to which (in standard deviation units) a child deviates from the average score of children of the same

Figure 1: Results of Reynell Developmental Language Scales Test; children's scores expressed in terms of months above and below average for age



N=27

age. Seven of the minded children had a score lower than 1·5 standard deviations below the norm on either or both scales. This is the level at which some concern might be shown for the child's language development. There were four boys and three girls in this low-scoring group and twelve boys and eight girls in the group which scored higher. Four in the low-scoring group were the children of immigrant mothers and three of non-immigrant mothers. This compared with seven immigrants and thirteen non-immigrants in the higher scoring group. Six children in the low-scoring group had two or more previous placements and one was in her first placement. The higher scores comprised nine children in their first placement and ten who had had more than one. Six of the children who scored lower than 1·5 standard deviation below the norm were the children of mothers engaged in non-manual work; one of them had a mother doing manual work. This compared with sixteen non-manuals and two manuals in the higher group.

The numbers are of course very small but the results are in general in line with what we know from other studies. Apart from those

children – more than a quarter of the total – with extremely low scores, concern must also be expressed that most of the minded children, 85 per cent, were functioning below average.

The implication of the results of the language test is not that a number of children from disadvantaged social circumstances were 'doing as well as could be expected', but rather that these children were already beginning to suffer from the effects of an impoverishing environment *and nothing much was being done about it*. The children's backwardness has clear implications for health, social welfare and education services, yet of the seven children who on the basis of the test are showing poor language development and should be referred for further examination, two had not attended the child welfare clinic in the last year.

Chapter 6
The Relationship between the Minder and the Child

To assess the relationship between the minder and the child it is necessary to consider the behaviour of each towards the other We assessed the quality of the minder's part in the relationship by observing her behaviour during the interview and by taking into account her report of her practice and experience with the child during the last week and particularly during the preceding day (see Appendix 2, pp. 90–1 below).

The assessment of emotional care was derived largely from Bettye Caldwell's Home Inventory items (Caldwell, 1967). This was appropriate both because the Home Inventory was designed to assess behaviour which can be observed during the course of an hour-long interview in a child's home and because it has been used with children of different races and classes (see Cravioto and De Licardie, 1972). In particular, we were drawn to its use because it deals with the observed relationship between a child and his mother or mother-substitute. We thought that it was important to assess the minder as mother-substitute rather than as nursery nurse or teacher because, popularly, her strengths and qualities are said to lie in this direction.

The assessment sheet was divided into two parts: (a) avoidance of restriction and punishment (six items); and (b) positive behaviour towards child (five items). Some of the items were scored on the presence of certain easily observed items of behaviour:

Minder neither slaps nor spanks child during visit.
Minder does not scold child during visit.
Minder does not interfere with child's actions or restrict child's movements more than three times a visit.
Minder caresses or kisses child at least once during the interview.

Other items depended on the minder's answer to various questions in the interview:

Minder reports no more than one physical punishment in the last week (Q. 21).
Minder can give differentiated description / individualized account of child's character / development / behaviour (Q.s 3, 12).

There were six other items which depended on the interviewer's judgment and arose out of what the minder said about the child in

the course of the interview and also out of her speech directed to the child during the visit. These items were as follows:

Minder does not express overt annoyance or hostility towards child during visit.
Minder does not speak slightingly of child during visit.
Minder indicates esteem / praise for child's behaviour / manner.
When speaking of child, minder's voice conveys positive feeling.
When speaking to child, minder's voice conveys positive feeling.

These latter items are scored on lines similar to those given in the guidelines in the Home Inventory instruction manual, e.g.:

Mother spontaneously praises child's qualities or behavior twice during the visit. In scoring this item, do not hesitate to read the mother's affect – any achievement reported with pride should count (can dress himself, has a good disposition, etc.). However, occasionally a mother will indicate her approval of her child's behavior by making what appears to be a negative statement – 'I tell you, this kid is really bad.' If she says that with a smile on her face and immediately follows the statement with some rather remarkable achievement – 'Would you believe he climbed out of his crib, got his bottle, and climbed back in all by himself?' – from which one can obviously infer that she is proud of him, then consider this one instance of praise. Do not credit this kind of semantic reversal if it stops with the negative term; score only if some proof of positive feeling is offered.

and:

When speaking of or to child, mother's voice conveys positive feeling. What you are looking for here is evidence that the mother feels good about her child – sounds animated when speaks about him, does not use a flat or querulous tone of voice.

Results: total scores

Most minders seemed not to restrict and punish the children, according both to their own report and also to what we observed during the course of the interview. They did not scold or slap the child, nor did they express overt hostility towards him or restrict his actions during the course of the visit. However, many of them did not show very much warm, positive behaviour towards the child either. In some cases they did not touch him or speak to him at all for the whole of the hour or more in which we were present. Because of this, some minders gained a low score on positive behaviour at the same time as a high score on avoidance of restriction and punishment, as Table 15 and 16 show.

The minder's behaviour towards the child

Table 15: Minder's score out of 6 on section C (a) of the assessment sheet; avoidance of restriction and punishment

Number of minders	32	2	1
Score	6	5	2
mean = 5·8	standard deviation = 0·7		N = 35

Table 16: Minders' score out of 5 on Section C (b) of the assessment sheet; positive behaviour towards the child

Number of minders	4	3	3	7	11	7
Score	0	1	2	3	4	5

mean = 3·1 standard deviation = 1·622 N = 35

91 per cent (32) of the minders scored six out of six on Section C (a) (avoidance of punishment), while more than half scored three or less out of five on the positive items. These scores did not relate to whether the child had had a relatively longer or shorter placement with his minder.

Individual items

The total scores presented in Tables 15 and 16 give a picture of the overall quality of the relationship between minders and children as manifested during our visits, and from the minders' own descriptions. What this is likely to mean to the children can be seen more vividly when we examine responses to the individual items of this not very demanding schedule.

Table 17: Scores on individual items of assessment sheet section C (b)

	Yes	*No*	*Number of minders*
(33) Minder indicates esteem/praise for child's behaviour/manner	22	17	39
(34) When speaking of child, minder's voice conveys positive feeling	21	18	39
(35) When speaking to child, minder's voice conveys positive feeling	21	2	23*
(36) Minder caresses or kisses child at least once during visit	18	19	37
(37) Minder can give differentiated description/ individualized account of child's character development/behaviour	27	12	39

**Note: Only 23 minders out of the 37 cases where the study child was present throughout the interview spoke to the child during the course of the visit.*

Table 17 shows that more minders than we would wish to see, from the point of view of the child's experience, failed to score on these items.

43 per cent (17) of the minders did not indicate any praise or esteem for the child (item 33). To score on this, any achievement of the child which the minder reported, or any positive quality of the child which

she referred to, was given credit. For example, in answer to Q. 3: 'What sort of child is he?', one minder replied, 'Well, I think he's very intelligent – very sensible. He's easy to get on with. He's very social with all the other children.' On the other hand, a minder who answered this question merely – and many did – with 'Oh, he's no trouble', and gave no further evidence of esteem throughout the interview, did not score.

46 per cent (18) of the minders did not convey any positive feeling when speaking of the child (item 34). However, 91 per cent of those who actually spoke to the child (23 out of 37) did convey positive feeling when they spoke to him (item 35).

51 per cent (19) of the minders did not kiss or caress the child during the visit. This included pats, stroking, or any affectionate contact. In fact, although we did not set out to score this, it is our impression that there was very little bodily contact at all between them.

Just under one-third (12) did not describe the child in a way which gave the interviewer an impression of his individual behaviour, character or development (item 37).

Table 18: Number of minders who initiated vocalization/speech to child during the visit, who initiated or encouraged play during the visit, who reported telling stories, reading a book or singing songs, 'yesterday'

	Number of minders		
	Yes	*No*	
Minder spoke to child during visit	23	14	N=37
Minder initiated or advanced play during visit	6	30	N=36
Minder reported stories, songs or books 'yesterday'	23	14	N=37

Only 20 per cent (6) of the minders initiated or advanced play during the course of the interview (item 14). That is, most of them did not get out toys, offer encouragement, help the children in their play or make suggestions with regard to it. (And, in general, it seemed to us that the level of play was fairly impoverished.)

More than one-third (14) of the minders did not speak to the child during the course of the visit (leaving aside initial introduction and goodbye rituals which, if they occurred, were often due to the interviewer's intervention).

More than one-third (14) had not, on their own report, told the child a story, read to him or sung him a song on the previous day.

It appears that many of our minders (and our sample was probably rather a favoured one – see p. 23) did not seem to have a high level of interaction with the children in their care, and it is to be concluded that they rarely related to the children, except during physical care, that is, feeding, dressing and toileting.

Affective relations with the child: minder and mother

The low scores of individual minders on positive aspects of child care and the comparative absence of punishment or rebuke referred to earlier indicate a low interaction of any sort between minder and child. As interviewers, we found this very striking. Both of us have had more than two years' experience of interviewing mothers, immigrant and non-immigrant, of all social classes, in their own home, often in the presence of their own pre-school children. This was as part of the Thomas Coram Research Unit's social survey. In this situation, there is usually a great deal of interaction between mother and child during the course of an hour-long interview. At the outset, the child often sits close to the mother for several minutes, then gets down to play, returns to her, climbs on her knees, asks for food or to watch the television, or wants her to play. He shows her toys or cries for attention. In fact the child's behaviour towards his mother impedes the flow of the interview. The mother responds to the child with caresses, talk, diversionary tactics or punishment. Sometimes she will break off the interview to meet his requirements and apologize for the interruption. Throughout there are frequent interactions between the mother and the child, which suggest the strength of the underlying relationship. Many of these are initiated by the child himself, responding in a situation where his mother is giving her attention to a stranger. The mother, meanwhile, initiates less interaction in order, no doubt, to expedite the course of the interview. We found by contrast that the minders had virtually no difficulty in concentrating on the interview because the children were surprisingly undemanding of their attention. And not only did the minder not initiate interaction with the child, but almost invariably the child attempted little or no interaction with the minder. Hence it was possible to carry out an interview with a minder in the presence of three children aged between 18 months and 2½ years, without their approaching their minder at all. In fact, at the minder's the children struck us frequently as being rather inactive and strangely 'good'.

It was because of observations such as these that we decided to supplement our observations of emotional care with a record of the frequency of child-initiated interaction between the minder and the study child. We thought that while the minder might be behaving a-typically because of our presence, and feel obliged to put on some sort of 'show' which might make her rather distant with the child, a child of this age (two to three years) would be behaving fairly typically, given that the interviewer, a stranger, was there. Certainly his behaviour would be naïve, without any intention to impress. If anything, he could be expected to seek out the minder more because of our presence.

We counted, therefore, the number of times the child initiated, or

attempted to initiate, an interaction with the minder during a twenty-minute period at the beginning of the interview. We commenced this observation period when we turned to the second page of the interview schedule. We noted the interactions, if any, in one of four columns on the right-hand side of the interview schedule. Each of the columns had its heading: 'touch' for when the child touched the minder; 'object' for when he brought an object to show her; 'vocalize' for when he spoke or babbled to the minder; and 'cry' for when he cried for attention or help. We noted the reaction of the minder on this and scored her 'a' if she responded positively to the child, 'b' if she merely tolerated him and 'c' if she rejected his approach. This technique of recording an adult's response to an attempt at interaction has been shown by others to be reliable (King, Raynes and Tizard, 1971). We carried out exactly the same procedure, usually within two weeks and not more than three weeks later, with the child and his mother at home, during the mother's interview. The results of these observations are set out in Tables 19 and 20. It can be seen (Table 19) that the child initiated on average more than six interactions with his mother and fewer than one and a half with his minder during the first twenty minutes of the respective interviews. These findings are statistically significant at $p<0{\cdot}005$.

Table 19: Interactions; mean scores of interactions initiated by the child towards the mother and towards the minder in a 20-minute period

	mother	*minder*	*significance* $p<$
child touches	2·2	0·4	0·005
child shows object	1·1	0·1	0·005
child vocalizes/speaks	2·3	0·8	0·005
child cries	0·2	0·1	
TOTAL	6·2	1·4	0·005
$p < 0{\cdot}005$ on Wilcoxon matched pairs			N=28

Table 20: Interactions towards the minder and towards the mother in a 20-minute period

	Number of interactions		
	zero	*1–5*	*more than 5*
towards mother	0	17	11
towards minder	11	15	2
			N=28

Every single child approached his mother at some time during the observation period (Table 20). Eleven of them approached their mother more than five times. The interactions were often prolonged and varied, and since our notation system was not sophisticated

enough to do them justice, the score with the mother represents a minimum score in most cases. In contrast, most of the children behaved in a subdued way at the minder's: eleven of them did not attempt any interaction with her and only two engaged in more than five interactions. There are similar results (a mean score of 1·7) when the total number of minders for whom interaction scores were noted are considered. These include all those minders for whom there was no observation of the child with his mother.

It should be noted that four children gave us additional cause for concern in that they were very withdrawn and sad at the minder's and were more than normally disruptive and attention-seeking with their mother. The following note was made about one of these children (we will call him 'C') after the mother's interview:

'C' behaved very wildly – tearing about, shouting, fighting with his sister, playing boisterously with his mother. He was quite aggressive with me, hanging on to me and pulling at my clothes. . . . It was hard to believe that this was the same passive child I had seen at Mrs R.'s.

And after the second visit to the minder to carry out the language test, the following note was made:

'C' was again passive, kneeling on the floor, head down, avoiding looking at me. He whispered answers to the test.

During the observation periods in the two conditions, 'C' initiated no interaction with his minder and eleven interactions with his mother. The other three children who worried us particularly initiated no interactions with their minders and two, six and thirteen interactions with their mothers. Two of these four children had not been to the child welfare clinic in the previous twelve months, nor had they been seen by a health visitor in the last six months.

Apart from these four children, it did not seem to us that the children were behaving in any abnormal way at home. They appeared to be interacting with their mothers in much the same way as many of the children we had seen in the course of our interviews for the TCRU social survey referred to earlier. Because of this, the interview with the mother went less smoothly than that with the minder, where there was little interruption.

It could be argued that the children had grown accustomed to us by the time of the mother's interview and that this accounted for the higher interaction rate. However, we observed a return to the other – lower – rate when we saw the child for the third time at the minder's during our second interview with her, although during this visit we did not count interactions.

It seems, then, that the child does not treat his minder in at all the same way as he treats his mother. He does not touch her as often, nor

does he speak to her as much: in fact, in these respects she is not a substitute-mother for him. The low interaction rate in no way correlates with the number of children a minder was looking after, nor with whether the observation took place in the presence of the minder's own pre-school children. Neither did the minder 'suppress' the children during the interview – we saw few admonitions or scoldings for, not only did the minders have little to do with the children at all during the interview, but, as Table 21 shows, most minders were of the opinion that their charges were very well-behaved. We had, in fact, asked about the child's behaviour in order to find out about his daily experience at the minder's. The information is illuminating, however, in the context of the child's relationship with his minder.

Only two minders out of 36 admitted that the child had been naughty on the previous day (Q.s 19 and 32, Table 21) and in reply to a further question (Q. 21), two-thirds (25) said that the child never did anything to get her down. Just under half (18) of them said that the child never sought attention from her at all. Of the remaining 19 most said that the child did not normally seek attention. but added a rider, for example: 'unless he's sickening for something'. And in answer to the question 'What sort of child is he?', the answer would frequently be: 'Oh, very good, no trouble at all.'

Table 21: Number of minders who reported that the child was naughty 'yesterday', that he ever 'got her down' and that he ever sought her attention

	Number of minders		
Minder's report	*yes*	*no*	
naughty 'yesterday'	2	36	N=38
ever gets her down	12	25	N=37
ever seeks attention	19	18	N=37

These figures may be compared with the responses which mothers in the TCRU social survey (unpublished) gave: 68 per cent of those mothers (N=110) said that they got irritable or felt angry with the child once a week or more, and 51 per cent of the mothers (N=101) said that the child presented problems of obedience on most days. Furthermore, we found no difference in interaction score between children who had been longer with their minders (more than ten months) and those who had had a shorter placement. No statistical comparison of the quality of the minders' and the mothers' responses to the child was made, because in eleven cases (out of 28) the child made no approach to the minder.

All of this suggests that the relationship between many of the minders and the children was rather a distant one. It is not sufficient for a woman to have had children herself to be able to generalize

her motherly behaviour towards other people's children. (cf. Anna Freud in her telling discussion – Freud, 1973 – of war-time fostering situations, where she compares the behaviour of natural mothers with that of foster mothers.) When a minder's own young children were present it was noticeable that they approached their mother much more frequently than did the minded children. They would stand next to her, touch her, and interrupt the interview with questions and demands while the minded children – even toddlers – kept their distance. The minder's own children were behaving as we have come to expect children to behave towards their own mother during an interview (see also chapter 9).

Another way of looking at all this is in the framework of attachment behaviour theory. Schaffer and others (Schaffer and Emerson, 1964) have noted that a child may have many attachment figures and can be very attached to persons other than the mother. Since the child spends a long time with the minder it might be expected that she would behave as such an attachment figure. Schaffer argues, however, that to be available and to provide physical care is not in itself sufficient for the formation of an attachment. He is speaking in this passage of mothers, but his statement could be relevantly applied to minders.

> . . . a person's constant presence in the infant's immediate environment is no guarantee that interaction will occur and the necessary stimulation be offered. The most available person has, of course, the best opportunity of providing such stimulation and for this reason the mother is, more often than not, the infant's principal object. Yet not every mother will avail herself of this opportunity: personality factors and practical considerations may prevent her from doing so . . .

It seemed to us that, for whatever reasons, most of the minders did not avail themselves of the opportunities open to them. They did not offer the children much stimulation and, apart from their physical needs, the minded children made few demands on their caretakers who had not become attachment figures, let alone mother-substitutes. Whether it is desirable for them to become substitute mothers is itself open to question. Perhaps the sort of commitment which many mothers have towards their children is too difficult for a stranger to acquire, and perhaps for some children there would be conflicts arising from such attachment which would be difficult for them. In any case, the natural mother might well be jealous of another person showing such commitment towards her child. That, however, there was in many of the minders we saw, so little involvement with the child, outside the purely physical aspects of minding, is disturbing.

Why the minders showed such little involvement needs more investigation. It could be that they selected children who made few demands. Certainly, they sometimes reported asking mothers to take away children who cried a great deal and needed to be comforted all

the time. It could also be that some children did not relate easily to the minder from the start, because of too rapid or tactless an introduction to her, with little care taken over the settling-in period. (It seemed to be the usual practice for mothers to leave their child initially without the sort of gradual introduction which is almost universal in playgroups and nursery schools.) It is also the case that minders reported that children were more clinging and demanding to start with but that they soon got over this. In other words, perhaps, the child no longer made many approaches to the minder because this behaviour had been extinguished through lack of reinforcement.

Chapter 7
The Mothers

As we have explained in chapter 2, the name and address of the study child's mother were obtained from the minder. (In the two cases where she did not know it, we were unable to interview the mother, since in those cases the local authority also did not know where she lived.) We visited the mother and made an appointment to interview her. We explained that we had been given her address by the minder, that we had interviewed the minder and met her child there, and would now like to hear from her about the child-care arrangements she made, about her working day and about her satisfaction with both of these. We stressed that we should like to see her when the child was up and about and active, not when he was tired at the end of a day, and arranged to come back, usually at a weekend.

The child's pre-school placements

One of the main aims of the interview with the mother was to obtain a history of the child's pre-school placements. For most of the 28 children all their pre-school experience had been at minders'. The two exceptions to this are noted below. Ten of the mothers had more than one child, and of these six had used, or were currently using, childminders for their other children.

Table 22: Number of minder placements, including the present, according to mother

Number of placements	*Number of children*
1	10
2	10
3	6
4	2
	N=28

Our sample was weighted towards children who had spent twelve months or more at the present minder's (thirteen children). The average duration of present placement was twelve months, with a standard deviation of 7·6. It will be apparent, therefore, that the figures in Tables 22 and 23 suggest considerable mobility in our

group of minded children. Eight (28 per cent) of them had had three or four placements. Furthermore, many of the placements were short lived. Slightly over one-third of all placements were for less than six months (even though this total includes present placements). A quarter of the placements were for less than three months. And many of the shortest placements reflect the mother's dissatisfaction – horror is often not too strong a word – with the standards of care offered; six of the placements lasted for under one month.

Table 23: Duration of attendance at the minder's according to the child's mother

Number of months	*Children's Placements:*	
	Childminding study	*TCRU survey*
under 3 months	16	26
3–5 months	8	14
6–9 months	16	10
10–14 months	9	4
15–23 months	10	3
24 months plus	4	0
TOTAL	63 N=28	57 N=36

Note: The number of placements in the childminding study listed in Tables 22 and 23 include two which were not at minders. Of the two children who had had 4 placements, one had spent 2½ months at a day nursery and the other had been fostered for 4 months. We have included these two placements since for the child the main thing is that they represent experience with different caring figures.

We have included in Table 23 information from the Thomas Coram Research Unit social survey of mothers in three London areas. In these areas 36 children had been at minders' before their third birthday; this included eight who were currently at minders'. The survey figures reveal a situation comparable to that we found in our childminding study: as can be seen, the 36 children had altogether had 57 minder placements, and most of these had been short lived. Only seven (12 per cent) of the placements had lasted for more than nine months; 40 (70 per cent) had been for under six months; and 26 (46 per cent) for under three months.

Further corroboration of the short-lived nature of placements in this form of care is provided by evidence from abroad. An article in *Le Monde* of 19 May, 1976, reported that, of children who had had minder placements in France, 50 per cent had changed minder four of five times before they were three years old.

Mothers' satisfaction with the present minding situation

As to the mothers' satisfaction with the present minder, slightly over a third were satisfied (Table 24). These mothers said they got on well with her and trusted her, or felt that the child was settled there, or

that there was no alternative provision that offered long enough hours. In a few cases mothers expressed pleasure and gratitude at the standards of care being given to their child.

None of the mothers in our sample knew the minder before the minding arrangement started. Mothers had found the minder through the local authority or from the health clinic, by recommendation from the minder they were moving the child from, or through a friend who knew of a minder. These methods of making contact are presumably the most common in the urban situation. We wonder whether in a small town environment personal friendships may be more likely to form the backcloth to the minding arrangement, and we would hazard the obvious guess that the relationship between minder and mother is likely to continue along friendly and co-operative lines in these circumstances.

Table 24: Mothers' desire for alternative pre-school provision

Mother wants present minder, plus playgroup or nursery school (part-time)		*Mother wants complete change from minder*		*Mother satisfied with present minder*	
now	2	now	10	no move at all intended	10
before child goes to primary school	3	before child goes to primary school	3		
				%	N=28

Nearly half the mothers wanted a complete change from the minder for their child. Dissatisfied mothers talked in terms of inadequate care (poor food, few toys, poor quality and quantity of attention by the minder): several argued that the minding situation is too private – you do not know what goes on there and you have no redress – or felt that the minder favoured her own child and neglected the minded one. One mother was worried that her child was not speaking well compared with her elder child who had spent his first years at home with her; she thought minders did not talk to the children enough. Mothers also claimed that day nurseries offered better care: that they have trained staff, more equipment and play-space; more learning situations. You can be sure the children will be well fed and cared for; you can see what goes on at a day nursery. Two of the mothers were hoping to get their child into an all-day nursery school. Another smaller group wanted the minder to take their child to and from a playgroup or half-day nursery school, as part of his day at the minder's. Mothers thought the child would benefit from more space, more equipment, a chance to mix with other children. This view suggests that these mothers think the minder's care needs supplementing.

It is worth noting in this connection that, in the TCRU survey

already referred to, when mothers who wanted pre-school places for their children were asked what form of provision they wanted, only two said they preferred to send their child to a minder (number of children=229). And confirmatory evidence of a low level of satisfaction with childminders comes from other sources, too. A recent report from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys indicated that only 29 per cent of mothers whose children were at minders preferred this form of care, whereas well over half the mothers using other forms of care were happy with them, and, notably, 67 per cent of mothers of day-nursery children were satisfied (Bone, 1976). It would appear, too, that dissatisfaction with minders is not confined to this country. The *Le Monde* article just cited suggests that there is widespread anxiety and unhappiness among French mothers about the minders they use. And a recent American account of the Danish system in which minders are employed by the local authority compares it favourably with the situation in the United States where private minding arrangements are widely used and where, according to the evidence quoted, mothers are reported as making very much the same criticisms as the mothers in our study did (Wagner and Wagner, 1976).

Mothers' satisfaction with work

A high proportion of the mothers in our study (23 out of 27) worked in jobs classed as III non-manual or above (Table 3). They all worked a full-time (30-hour or more), 5-day week. When they were asked (Q. 18) whether they would still go out to work if more money were available from another source, a high proportion, 21 (78 per cent), said they would. This seems to suggest that their satisfactions from work were to do not only with money but also with aspects of the job situation itself; this is confirmed in the answers to the previous questions (Q.s 14–17) on the advantages and disadvantages of working. Advantages most frequently mentioned by mothers were: that she enjoys the work; that she likes the company, the social life; and that she thinks (often from experience) that she would feel 'cooped up' at home, bored and lonely. The main disadvantage mentioned was that the mother wished she could spend more time with the child; this was the main reason given for wishing to cut hours of work.

Table 25: Mothers' satisfaction from work

Full-time workers (30 hours per week or more)	*Would not cut hours*	*Would cut hours*	*Would stop working*	
Childminding study	11 (41%)	10 (37%)	6 (22%)	N=27
TCRU social survey	(10%)	(50%)	(40%)	N=81

Of the six who would stop working, three thought the minder was poor, one that she was tolerable and two that she was good. Only one mother who was dissatisfied with the minder would not stop work: she had been on medication for depression and thought it better for her mental health to work.

A tentative suggestion concerning the very wide difference between our figure of 41 per cent, as against 10 per cent for the TCRU social survey, on the question whether the mother would cut her hours down if she could, is that an explanation may lie in very high motivation to work among many mothers of minded children. Good, all-day care is very difficult to find and, except in cases of extreme need, minders are almost the only available resource; these mothers have persisted until they have found a reasonably satisfactory minder.

Chapter 8
Local Authority and Health Services

We are concerned here with the extent to which social and health services play a part in overseeing what is essentially a private form of day care. In the light of the mother's all-day work commitments, our main concern was with the child: does he go on regular visits to the child welfare clinic, and who takes him there? Are his social and health needs being picked up by the services?

Local authority services

The legal position on the registration and supervision of childminders is set out in Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act, 1948, amended by the Health Services and Public Health Act, 1968, Section 60. In brief, the local authority is obliged to keep a register of people in the area who receive into their homes, for payment, children under the age of five for at least two hours a day. Beyond this, the local authority has powers to fix the maximum number of children a minder may take, and to make requirements with regard mainly to the health and safety of the children. In order to set and maintain these standards, the local authority has the power to enter the minder's home. A clear statement of the legal position, together with a full and admirable discussion of the implications of it, is given in *Who Minds*, (CRC, 1975: ch. 6).

Many local authorities, however, are intervening in the childminding field beyond the legal requirements. Some of the minders we saw spoke highly of local authority workers and felt that their status and conditions of work as minders were being improved by contact with them. In all, 32 of the 39 minders had by their own account been visited by a local authority worker in the last six months. In some of these cases we gathered that relationships were friendly and trusting on both sides and that contact was frequent. It should be pointed out, however, that the extent to which the most willing and active local authority worker can establish a working relationship with a minder depends a good deal on the minder herself. For instance, in one area where local authority intervention was enthusiastic and was highly praised by some minders, we interviewed a minder who was having nothing to do

with the various schemes and who gave the impression that she did not want her practices interfered with. In other areas minders were rarely visited, and seven (eighteen per cent) of the sample said they had not been visited in the last six months. In at least two further cases a sudden and unlooked-for visit to the surprised minder was the direct result of the interviewer's unwittingly stirring up action by approaching the social worker for lists of minders' names. The social worker then visited the minder in order to give advance notice of our coming.

Health services

Health visitors are expected to take an interest in children under five, and it would seem reasonable to expect that they would visit minders as part of this interest. Efficiency in this would demand that they serve an area rather than a GP's practice. In the case of minded children whose mothers are at work all day it would seem particularly important for health visitors to see the child at the minder's. In some cases, local authority workers ask health visitors to visit minders if they are concerned about a child. In our sample, health visitors had visited sixteen (of the 39) minders' homes in the last six months, and in ten of those cases the minder had a child under five years old of her own. (Because it is not always possible to establish by questioning which child the health visitor came to see, we have made no distinctions on this point.)

Table 26: Number of children taken to child welfare clinic in last 12 months, according to mother and minder

Number of children		
3		Taken to CWC – by minder
17	21	– by mother
1		– by minder and mother
8		Not taken to CWC
		N = 29

In 29 cases we were able to ask both minder and mother about taking the child to the child welfare clinic (Table 26). Eight children (28 per cent) had not been taken in the last twelve months, excluding any whose mother reckoned her GP offered a comparable service. Six of these eight children were not seen at the minder's by the health visitor either. In fact, most of the children who did go to the clinic were taken by their mothers, who usually took time off work for this; in some cases this was classed by their employer as part of annual leave.

Part 2
Childminding as a Service

Chapter 9
Discussion: Implications for a Service

It should be re-emphasized at this point that our sample was probably an unusually favoured one. All the minders were registered; many of them were in frequent contact with the local authority, and supported by it both morally and materially. Moreover, just under one-third had had experience – and a few of these training, too – in child-care work before they started minding (see p. 23). The housing conditions at the minders' were on the whole acceptable by current urban standards. Our study was so designed that more than half the children had been with the same minder for ten months or more, which argues a certain satisfaction in both minder and mother. Almost all the mothers of the minded children were in non-manual occupations, including some professions. This study is not, then, concerned with the grossly deprived child and the unregistered 'back-street' minder.

The central issue in any discussion of childminding as a service must be the quality and stability of care received by the children. And what disturbs us here is that on the whole the children in these relatively favoured situations were not receiving care which we consider to be adequate or acceptable; nor was it notably stable.

It is important to emphasize in this connection that the day-care received by immigrant children whose mothers are working appears to be largely with minders (CRC 1975). If minding is a poor service then these children are at risk here as they are in many other aspects of their life: housing, later education, job prospects. Alan Little (1976), referring to National Children's Bureau figures, says that 18 per cent of West Indian primary school children, as against six per cent of non-immigrant children in central London, are multiply-deprived. And Rutter (1972), in discussing the risks to young children whose habitual caretakers do not give them sufficient loving care, attention and stimulation, suggests that such children's cognitive development may be held back. Our sample of children comprised twelve immigrant and sixteen non-immigrant children.

Our discussion assumes that the trend for women with young children to go out to work is irreversible, at least in the foreseeable future. Figures quoted recently (Tizard, Moss, and Perry, 1976)

indicate how dramatic this trend is: 18·7 per cent of mothers with under-fives went out to work in 1971, an increase of 65 per cent over 1961 figures. In some of the London boroughs the current rate is thought to be much higher. At the very least it can be said that Government inattention to this trend has resulted in too few day-care places for children, and in low standards of care at childminder's. This is too important a matter to be left to the forces of supply and demand, which in any case do not lead in the current high-demand situation to high standards. (One reason for over-minding must be that there are not enough minders and, as we have said, minders like other mothers are increasingly finding that they need to go out to work.)

The following discussion seeks to throw light on the underlying problems which give rise to these inadequacies. The discussion will be followed by proposals which seek to meet some of the problems in order to improve the quality of the child's experience and lead to greater stability of care.

Poor conditions of service

Compared with almost all other workers, minders get a raw deal. The hours are long, the pay is negligible when essential expenses have been deducted; and the conditions of work are characterized most markedly by insecurity. A few local authorities have various schemes for paying or subsidizing a few minders. But minders are not for the most part insured against accident to themselves, to their charges or to their property in the course of their work. And, in general, they have no assurance of receiving a regularly paid, fixed income, let alone of being covered for sickness and holidays. When asked what they did about emergencies and sickness in their own family, minders were often at a loss for a reply. The subject of holidays came up spontaneously as being a difficult, unresolved area of the job. Some minders worked in pairs to the extent that they looked after each other's minded children in emergencies, although this meant an increased burden for a limited period. We think that working in pairs is a good idea, not only for emergencies but also to get the children together in a larger group and to provide some reciprocal support between the minders. However we also think that emergencies and holidays present an unresolved problem. This subject is considered later (p. 79). The extent to which the minder has any security depends on the private agreement she is able to make with the parent, and on how many children are currently available for her to mind. She cannot oblige a parent to pay her when a child is sick or when she herself is too ill to mind. When a child leaves, often at very short notice, her income is cut until she finds a replacement. Some minders are able to strike a harder bargain than others because

of forceful personality, long years of learning to be hard, or because of a scarcity of minders in the area.

The low insecure pay is perhaps the most striking indication that minding is regarded on all sides as a low-status job. Another indication is that most mothers do not opt for this form of care and are relatively dissatisfied with it (see p. 55). Furthermore, judging from our study, most minders do not view minding as a child-care job. Frequently they do not see it as a job at all: they take it up and continue to do it for their own convenience rather than from an informed, caring interest in children.

The fact that the job takes place in the minder's own home has various disadvantages. Her husband and own older children may need meals during her working day; and her younger children make demands on her motherly care and attention – for meals, conversation, help and for accompaniment to and from primary school or pre-school. In addition, caring for the minded child in her own home means that the active, messy, disruptive and often destructive activities of a normal pre-school child have to be contained in an environment composed of the minder's own belongings and life: her carpets, wall-paper, furniture, books, ornaments, electrical equipment, and so on. And of course she gets no recompense for wear and tear. Thirdly, in this situation the minder's home is open to strangers – the parents (leaving aside local authority personnel for the moment) – and she often sees this as an invasion of her privacy, particularly at the end of the working day. It is partly for this reason that some minders have children ready and waiting in outdoor clothes some time before parents arrive to pick them up.

From the child's point of view various detrimental effects are likely to follow from the minder's poor conditions of work. Important among these is instability of care; a child may experience frequent changes of minder as each in turn returns to more profitable and acceptable employment outside the home. Since one very common response to low pay is to over-mind (that is, to mind too many children), and since mothers are often dissatisfied with minders, the child may be faced with frequent changes in the constitution of his peer group. He may frequently spend his day with children who are trying to settle into yet another new placement. All of this is likely to be unsettling for the child.

When the minder has many children to cope with, she is unlikely to take them on any but essential outings, even if she sees any desirability in broadening the children's range of experiences. It is, after all, very difficult for one woman to take out a group of young children. And to take them on public transport would be to deplete still further her tiny wages. The children will not in general have access to a wide range of good quality, age-appropriate toys,

because the minder cannot afford them. Their play is restricted by the confines of the domestic space and also by the minder's concern for the preservation of her own property. In addition to these disadvantages the child has a caretaker who is already occupied with her own children and her domestic cares, as well as with the work that is created by the presence of the minded children.

Minder as mother-figure?

We have shown that, for the most part, the style of relationship between the minder and the child was not at all similar to that between the same child and his mother (chapter 6). And it seemed to us that the sort of relationship between the minded child and his mother was very like other child/mother relationships we have observed. Bowlby in his analysis (1971) of the literature on the formation of attachments, puts forward a useful definition of a 'mothering way of treating a child': he says that mothering seems to be 'engaging in lively social interaction with him and responding readily to his signals and approaches'. The particular focus of Bowlby's approach here is not towards aspects of mothering like emotional identification with and commitment to the child: his approach, rather, underlines necessary features of a mother and child relationship which one would wish to see developing in any relationship between a child and his caretaker. Bowlby's definition provides a striking criterion against which to judge the deficiencies in the minder's maternal behaviour and a clear indication as to why the children appear so unattached to them.

Those people who present the minder as a mother figure and undervalue on this ground the relevance of the impoverished experience of the children in her care are misled. We suspect that they are misled because they extrapolate from the domestic setting in which day care is provided and assume that a mother, working in her own home, must be behaving like a mother to any child who comes to her. By implication, and sometimes explicitly, this picture is contrasted with that of the young nursery nurse (a non-mother) working in an institution. For such onlookers, the motherly bosom of the minder promises more comfort than the nylon overall of the nursery nurse. Bowlby's argument about the importance of interaction between the caring person and the child is clearly of the utmost relevance here, because to have been a mother to her own children is not necessarily enough for the minder as far as forming a relationship with someone else's child is concerned. To be able to do this is a skill which perhaps needs to be learned. We should like at this point to discuss a number of factors, some of which may account for the minder's non-mothering behaviour.

In the first place, the views of the minder about a relationship

with the child often go no further in terms of practical action than thinking of settling in a new child with a few hugs, and of being available for comfort in distress. It is quite a step from this way of thinking to recognizing that the development and continuance of a good relationship with the child depends on interacting and responding in all the situations that the day presents: play, feeding, sleep, toileting, television-watching, outings, story-times. However, even if she does realize the importance of this the minder, as we have seen, has many other commitments and preoccupations. Furthermore, she is often in the job for reasons other than an interest in child care.

It is worth commenting here on interaction within the context of the minder's job situation as compared with that of the nursery nurse. Although the nursery nurse has a larger number of children in her care than do most of the minders in our sample, her opportunities for interaction are greater: she has no other commitments during her working day, for she is employed specifically to be with the children; in addition her training suggests to her the importance of interacting with them. Whether the interaction between the nursery nurse and her children is actually greater than that between a minder and her children is open for investigation. We make the comparison to show that the minder is in these ways disadvantaged compared with the nurse.

We should like to point also to the presence of the minder's own pre-school child as a factor which may predispose the minder to keep her relationship with the minded child cool. This is a complex matter which needs a detailed study. However, eighteen of our sample of minders had one or two pre-school children of their own, and in those interviews where the own child was present we observed a pattern of behaviours. The own child usually sat close to the minder, and demanded attention from her. The minded children sat quietly on the floor, engaged in low-level play or watching television; they did not show jealousy of the minder's own child, nor did they make demands on the minder. But in some instances the own child did show jealousy of the minded child, even to the extent of kicking and shoving him when the minder was out of the room for a minute. This description may serve to suggest the dilemma the minder is in: any move she makes towards the minded child may be greeted with jealousy by her own child. A contrasting example is provided by an older minder (whose children had grown up and moved out) who devoted plenty of her attention to the one minded child and interacted with her a good deal during the interview, and clearly derived pleasure from having a child in her home again.

A further factor which may underlie the lack of 'mothering' is the large number of children who pass through minder's hands over the

years. It is interesting that the minder who displayed the most motherly behaviour, measured by the child's interaction with her and by her own behaviour during the interview, was a woman who had been minding for only six months. It is possible that after the experience of minding many children, some of them for a short time, the minder becomes less involved with each successive child. This may be compounded by a succession of poor relationships with parents, a subject which we go on to discuss. The lack of involvement we saw in some minders was dramatically pointed up by the case of a minder who did not know the names of two of the children she was minding, another who called the child 'baby' and had to look up his name, and a third who was calling an immigrant child by his surname, although the mother had tried to clarify this with the minder. (The children in question had been with the minder for twelve, nine, one, and six months.)

Whatever the reasons for this low level of relationship it is one which is impoverishing for the child and does not further his healthy intellectual and social development.

The minder/parent relationship

The relationships between child-care personnel and parents are often difficult, for a variety of reasons: parents feel excluded from the premises and from consultation, and the child-care people may feel superior in knowledge and child-care practices to the parents. In the minder/mother situation this sort of difficulty is compounded by, perhaps most importantly, the money nexus.

The minder's pay usually comes from the mother's wage packet. Though it is very small as pay, it represents quite a large proportion of the mother's wages. Mothers often think the child would be better off at a nursery of some kind, and that such a placement would not cost more or much more than the minder, and yet they cannot find a nursery place. The mother has to negotiate with the minder over terms: payment in advance or in arrears, payment if the minder or child is sick. She is in a weak position: usually, she must try to keep the placement since there is so little choice, and she may feel that the child is settled there even if the minder is not very good. She cannot afford to lose days or weeks looking for another minder. So she is often obliged to make an agreement which is not what she feels to be reasonable.

From the minder's point of view, putting it at its best, the mother is seen as someone who has to be trusted, even though she is not personally a friend, to maintain her part of the bargain, to accept the minder's terms. At its worst, minders may view mothers as characteristically non-payers, disappearers at the end of the week, people who refuse to produce cash for holiday times, and so on.

Both minder and mother are insecure about the money side of the transaction, and it is personally important to both of them; this is not true of most forms of pre-school provision. Integral to this insecurity is the uncertainty about when and with what notice the arrangement may end. To visit minders and mothers is to hear many tales of arrangements broken at a week's or even a day's notice, leaving bitterness and distrust stored up for future reference.

It is not uncommon to meet distrust and disapproval between other child-care workers and parents, but it is nonetheless deplorable. We frequently met with minders who disapproved of mothers going out to work, of parents' child-rearing practices (particularly in relation to toilet-training and feeding), of parents' standards of cleanliness. In a few cases we met outright racism. Mothers often disliked minders' practices with respect to toilet-training, felt that the child was given too long a rest or an unnecessary rest, or thought the minder did not give enough attention to the child.

The person who should concern us most in all this is, of course, the child. At one extreme a minder may feel indisposed to become involved in a close relationship with a child who has been the subject of a difficult money transaction, particularly if she is in conflict with the mother over such basic things as whether a mother should stay at home and look after her own children. At another, the minders may consider that they are doing the mother a favour or a service, that they are helping her out rather than that they have taken on a child-care job. Doing a favour is no doubt good in itself, but we formed the impression that a few minders were just covering the period of the mother's absence, instead of providing a warm and stimulating environment for the child. From the child's point of view it is clearly desirable that the two caring adults should be co-operating on his care and upbringing, carrying out the same programme of toilet-training, talking to each other about his eating and sleeping habits and preferences, discussing problems that arise in his day-to-day care.

The part played by the local authority and health services:
The local authority

Reference has been made in chapter 8 to the legal position regarding the registration of minders. Local authority obligation is minimal once the minder is registered although the authority has the power to visit the minder's home, essentially in order to see that the terms of registration are being kept. However, some social service departments do now play a much larger part in the childminding field. They may be responding to some extent to circulars 13/65 and 37/68, but it also seems likely that the recent upsurge of television and press publicity about minding has had an effect on them. Where they were

taking an active interest in minders (from our experience of the sample), the day-to-day life of the child had often been improved. Toys had been lent or a grant made for their purchase, and almost all of the eight children who had attended a play-group or drop-in centre had in fact gone to one provided solely for the use of minded children and minders. Also, the provision of equipment such as double pushchairs and cots may well have facilitated better practice. Minders in areas with childminding projects often spoke very appreciatively of the support they received from local authority social workers. They felt that their status was enhanced and that they had someone to turn to with their problems. Nevertheless, it must be said that minders who were in close contact with the local authority were not necessarily providing better care than others; in fact their scores on average were slightly but not significantly lower than those of the others when practice and attitudes were examined. The same was true of those who had received some sort of child-minding training (Table 11). We would also draw attention to the fact that one-third of the minders in close contact with a local authority worker were over-minding, and had an average of six children each.

Two gaps in the local authority service may be mentioned at this point. First, the local authority is not required to have any contact with parents, and since the contractual arrangements are made between minder and parent there is no reason why the local authority and the parents should have anything to do with each other once a list of minders' names has been handed over. However, some local authorities do attempt to bridge this gap by asking parents to come for an interview at the office, with a view to 'matching' the child and the minder. We shall return to this subject later in the chapter, and again in our proposals in chapter 10. We note here that, in so far as the local authority concerns itself with the childminding situation at present, it seems that the main focus of its attention is the minder. It is true that she needs support and training, but it sometimes appeared to us that the minder was seen by the local authority worker as the primary client, while the parent and the child received less attention. This may be because local authorities have no responsibilities to the parents. Furthermore, since the help given to minders by the local authority is often concerned with the problems they meet with parents, the parents' position may be less well considered and represented; in fact a stereotype of parents may emerge. Another feature of the situation is, of course, that the local authority wishes to hold on to the services of the minder, as well as attempt to improve the quality of the care she offers, and the first of these aims may take precedence over the second. It would, by contrast be desirable for the local authority worker to view the child as

his client, and to work for his best interests, by working towards the establishment of on-going relationships between parent and minder.

Second, as regard the keeping of data on minders and children, there is no obligation on the local authority to go beyond the keeping of a register of minders. In our experience there is considerable variation from borough to borough, and even within boroughs, as to the amount of information they keep and as to how up to date it is. There are, of course, many grounds for considering it important that local authorities should know where the pre-school children in their area spend their day, if they are not at home. Perhaps the most important with respect to minded children is that knowledge of their whereabouts is essential in any attempt to improve the over-seeing by the health services of a very vulnerable group.

Health services

There is then the question of the health visitor's part in this situation: one of her responsibilities is to see to the needs of under-fives and to encourage their attendance at the child welfare clinic; the local authority is responsible for referring to her (via the area health authority) cases that seem especially to demand her skills. It seems to us that children who are not served by the health visitor and by the clinic are to that extent at risk. As we saw in chapter 8, 27 per cent of the children had not attended a welfare clinic in the last twelve months, and three-quarters of these had not been visited by the health visitor at the minder's. The children not attending the clinic included two with especially low language scores; and two others who seemed to us to be withdrawn at the minder's and over-active at home. The numbers are of course small, but we nonetheless think there is an important point here.

A comprehensive health service for children should aim to cover all of them. The recent Report of the Committee on the Child Health Services (1976) stresses this as a major aim of its proposed changes in the structure of these services; and it emphasizes that the health care services should be readily available to parents, and easy to use (see, especially, chapter 5). In brief, the Report suggests that nursing officers should be responsible for arranging that child health visitors should cover a geographically defined community and that parents should be required to declare a change of address when they collect family allowances, this information to be passed to the area health authority. Better record keeping about children in the area, and more rigorous follow-up should result, with benefit especially to families not now using the services adequately (9.21). We would add that if working parents are to use services then these must be available in the evening (a point the Report makes) or, better in our view,

parents must be released on full pay to see to their children's health needs. In addition, as we have demonstrated, the sample of children we saw was in some respects at risk: they did poorly on the language test, their affective relationship with their day-to-day caretaker was inadequate to their needs, the environment in which they spent their day was unstimulating; they were likely to experience changes of placement. If being minded, as we suspect, exposes children to greater than average risks, then the health services should be aware of the situation and structured to meet it (as they are, for instance, in the case of day-nursery children).

We should note here that several minders gave anecdotal accounts of their difficulties in making their opinions heard by local authority and medical ears when they had a situation on their hands which needed outside help. In one case, for instance, a minder who suspected a child was being battered at home told her local authority worker of her suspicions. She was angry that, after this initial referral, she was never afterwards asked for her opinion or invited to attend case conferences of the people concerned with this situation, though she did later hear (through the local grapevine) that her suspicions were correct and that some action was taken in the case. Her point was that she should have been involved as part of a team in a complex matter of this kind. Whatever the merits of this particular example – and we heard several similar ones from concerned and responsible minders – the point is a valid one: it is desirable for the children's well-being that minders should be seen as responsible child-care personnel.

Summary: Implications as regards the child's welfare

As a group, the minders we saw were doing an insecure job involving conflicting roles. They were overworked and underpaid. Too often in their behaviour they did not respond to the children's needs for lively interaction. In addition, many aspects of the job made the formation of a good relationship with the child difficult: in particular, preoccupation with too many other jobs and chores, having too many children to care for, and poor relationships with parents.

The children spent a low-level, under-stimulated day in unchanging, often cramped surroundings. Many did not get the love and attention they needed. Some had experienced frequent changes of minder. Most of the mothers were not satisfied with the standards of care offered.

Local authority intervention was improving standards in the day-to-day experience of the children, with respect at least to toys and numbers of outings. The health services were not dealing with the problems raised by the vulnerable situation of this group of children.

Evidence from abroad: an instructive contrast

We should like to draw attention at this point to two very different ways of over-seeing systems of day care in private homes in other countries, using the United States and Denmark as examples. Such evidence as is available about the system in the United States suggests that day care of all kinds varies very much in quantity and quality, not only from state to state, but from district to district. A recent OECD report (1975) indicates that though some family day-care homes (i.e. childminders) are licensed, it is not known what proportion these represent of the total. In other words, there is no information on how many children are spending their day or in what forms of provision. However, it is estimated that 10 per cent of family day-care homes are licensed, and that 1–2 million children are cared for in this way.

A recent study (Wagner and Wagner, 1976) of assessments that have been made in the United States of the quality of care in family day-care homes states that: 'The only really conclusive, positive thing that can be said about family day care in America today seemed to us to be that it's convenient. You walk around the corner and you leave the kid. When you get home, you pick him up. (It's close to the bus stop.)' They go on to refer to the low pay of family day-care mothers (minders), and to the 'sporadic, if not highly questionable' attempts that have been made to improve the lot of these workers (see Grotberg, 1971). A summary of the current minding scene in the United States has been made by Ruderman (1968):

> Child welfare agencies deplore the difficulty of recruiting competent women as family day-care mothers; the low level of personnel in this field is generally acknowledged. . . . Competent, trained women – nurses, teachers, others who may enjoy young children and be qualified to work with them – are not likely to be attracted to an occupation that restricts them to their homes, provides no professional associations or adult stimulation or recognition, and pays very poorly. Under such conditions, family day care will continue to draw many who are undertrained, incompetent, who have little to offer children in their care, and who may in fact be doing such work only because of inability to qualify for any other form of employment.

This view of the American situation provides striking corroboration of the views we have formed about minding in this country as a result of our study of standards of care. It suggests, perhaps, that private child-care arrangements in different countries are subject to the same disadvantages and open to the same abuses. It also lends support to the view that radical change in the structure of the service is necessary in order to make this form of care open and accountable, and professional in orientation.

In contrast to the American scene, there is a service set up in Denmark which aims to meet the growing demand for day-care places without lowering standards of care (Wagner and Wagner,

1976). The local authority employs and pays the day-care mother (i.e. childminder), and offers in-service training. The authority provides toys, nappies and feeding equipment. A local authority worker is on call at all times for emergencies, and there is a pool of emergency staff who can stand in for a time if need be. Visits to the day-care mother take place at least twice a month, and she also attends meetings at the office, where a crèche is provided. The child's mother approaches the local authority worker for a place for her child, who is then 'matched' with a day-care mother and is introduced to her on an initial visit with his mother. The child spends a trial period of three months with his day-care mother, during which time it is her duty to establish friendly relations with his mother too. Parents pay the local authority on the same basis and at the same rates as for a day-nursery place. The local authority worker holds a meeting each month with the parents she deals with.

It is obvious that this system introduces a large element of supervision into the minding situation, together with support for the minder and adequate pay. From the parents' point of view, the most important additional advantage is, presumably, accountability; the local authority is responsible to the parent for maintaining adequate standards, and the minder, as a paid employee, must conform to local authority requirements. As to the child himself, the fact that the local authority, the parent, and the minder are in frequent contact, each with the other two, is likely to improve efforts on all three sides to work for his welfare. It remains the case, however, as Wagner and Wagner point out, that some disadvantages of day care based in a private home persist, even in this carefully devised service. They make four main points on which we should like to comment.

First, they say, there remains doubt as to the competence of the minder. We would agree, but would note that more rigorous selection, together with training and practice before starting the job, could help to some extent to overcome this.

Second, the private home cannot match the facilities of the day nursery, nor can it provide a larger group of peers for the child. We would suggest that linking the minder to a day nursery, or to another kind of pre-school provision, for sessions there, together with increased use of an office-based crèche, could improve this aspect of the situation.

Third, they suggest that studies are needed to assess the pros and cons of this form of day care for various kinds of high-risk children. It would seem on the face of it that the advantage (in an institution) of having specialist help to hand has to be set against the possible advantage to the child of being in a small group with the one (motherly?) caretaker, who might specialize in looking after difficult children.

Fourth, continuity of care cannot be assured under a system in which there is only one caretaker. If the caretaker and the child do not get on together, or if, we would add, the caretaker decides to stop doing the job, then the child may have to be moved. In an institutional setting this would not be necessary. To ensure continuity of care should, in our view, be a major aim in setting up or improving a service, and the fact that it cannot be ensured in the minding situation where one adult alone looks after the child (and cannot be replaced in that setting) is a built-in disadvantage of the system. We do not see that it can be eradicated, although the current situation (of which we have given examples in chapter 7) could presumably be improved if minders were financially secure and professionally oriented, so that they were more capable of helping the child to settle in, and less likely to leave the job at short notice.

We would add a fifth point: admirable as the Danish scheme is in many respects, it has not, as far as one can judge, eliminated another built-in disadvantage of child care in the privacy of the home: that the worker has no colleagues constantly on hand to provide support and encouragement in her work. Provision of a 'phone-in service, though useful for routine contacts and in emergencies, is no substitute for a friend on the job.

Chapter 10
Proposals

In order to meet the problems discussed in chapter 9, we think the following proposals are necessary to a serious attempt at improving the service offered by childminders to children.

Numbers of children

No minder, unaided, should care for more than three children under five, including her own. Local authorities must be impressed with the importance of this as one of the basic requirements for maintaining and improving standards of child care.

Pay and conditions of work

The Finer Report (1974), after noting that there is 'urgent need for a considerable expansion in day-care services for children under five provided or supported by public authorities' (8.118), expresses 'deep concern' about existing standards of care at some minders, and suggests that 'day-fostering schemes should be developed by local authorities as part of their child-care services', with minders paid and employed by the local authority (8.133). These recommendations are restricted to children in one-parent families, some of whom have needs over and above those of other children. Finer wishes these needs to be met by good child-care services and does not see minding as assuring a good service unless it is developed as paid work within a local authority structure (8.134).

Both the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE, 1975) and the Community Relations Commission (CRC, 1975) go further. They suggest local authority employment of childminders as important in any attempt at remedying the current deplorable level of pay and conditions of work. In the light of our findings we would strongly agree with this. Childminders should be paid employees of the local authority, with a salary minimally commensurate to that of nursery nurses, and entitled to paid holidays, superannuation, sick leave and insurance. It is a matter of justice that minders, like any other workers, should be paid adequately and securely for their work, and they should not have to depend on the small, insecure payment a parent makes. Furthermore, removal of the money transaction

and the contractual arrangements from the parent and minder would take away the most aggravating factor in the minder/parent relationship. We are not considering here whether or not parents should contribute to the cost, as they do in the case of day nurseries.

Expenses

Children in day-care have to be fed, washed, kept clean, taken out, kept safe and warm, given toys and other equipment to play with. And their presence involves wear and tear on the premises. None of these expenses should be met from the minder's salary. Grants, or where appropriate provision in kind, should be made to cover these matters. This proposal would remove another manifest injustice from the minder's situation; it would also improve the children's situation, providing them with a certain minimum standard of material comfort and stimulation. It would remove from the minder the grim necessity of making choices she should not have to make between, for instance, food and toys, or between restricting the children and having her property damaged. All minders should be provided with a telephone, and arrangements similar to those made for social workers on call should be made for help with costs. It is essential that a woman in charge of other people's small children should have easy access to services, both for emergencies and for general convenience.

Help with routine work

Work pressures at present crowd on minders from all sides. The routine work of housewife and mother, and the work arising directly from the presence of the minded children, may lead her to spend a disproportionate amount of time on chores, and may discourage her – not least because of tiredness – from giving good quality care and attention to the children. We have seen that the relationship in our sample between minder and child does not suggest that there is a lively and continuing experience of interaction. We would not wish to suggest that there should be no 'domestic' content to the day: jobs around the house can provide a useful focus for the child and the minder to co-operate and communicate: cooking and washing-up, in particular, can be pleasurable and educative activities for the child and can serve as dividing points in the day. But provision of a home help for, say, five hours a week, would relieve the minder of some of the more routine work.

Training

At the Sunningdale Conference held in January 1976, Brian Jackson expressed the view that childminding should commend itself to the nation on grounds of cheapness. And on training he said: 'With childminders, no expensive professional training is needed. It is a

matter of modest group discussions, short one-hour courses, regular visiting. We do not want three-year courses or a Royal College of Childminding'. (Jackson,B., 1976). In our view, by contrast, to teach someone to alter her attitudes and practice, to develop new skills and to throw out or modify old behaviours, is not only difficult but time-consuming. It requires skill, tact, and long periods of help. One is asking people who have successfully brought up their own children to accept that looking after other people's children is a different matter. probably requiring more conscious application of skills and methods. Minders, like other child-care staff, have to learn to relate to the children in a caring and stimulating way – this is the main thing. They have also to be aware of the complexities of taking on another mother's child and the need to learn how to co-operate with that mother in the best interests of the child. This learning must be spread over time and must be continually reinforced. Brian Jackson's own frank account of the poor results of a six-week course run recently for unregistered minders by the Elfrida Rathbone Society (Jackson, B., 1975) points to the pitfalls of a short, inadequately considered course. It can also be said that another major disadvantage of the short optional course is that while there may be some element of carrot, there is no stick: a minder may refuse to participate at all, and if she does participate there is no built-in demand on her that she reach a given standard of knowledge and behaviour, nor that she put into practice what she has been learning.

We suggest that, prior to registration, but on full pay, minders should normally work for a year in a child-care setting – a play-group, day nursery, nursery class or nursery school – that is, in provision already set up with trained staff and operating within the local community. Training during this year would take two forms. Firstly, the minder would be encouraged and helped to participate in the care and education of the children, instead of being left to cope alone. Secondly, discussion of the implications of this practical work, together with more formal instruction on such matters as child development and information on the physical care of children, would be provided concurrently on one or two days a week. Opportunities should be made available for the prospective minder to work with children of all ages up to five years. During the year and at the end of it minders would be assessed and, if deemed to have reached satisfactory standards in practice and approach, would be able to take on minded children. Existing minders who did not wish to participate in the scheme or who were unable to reach reasonable standard would be allowed to retain their present children until they reached school age. This would gradually phase out unsatisfactory personnel. The introduction of such a scheme would in any case have to be gradual, since it would depend on local provision of pre-school

facilities, and on voluntary and local authority willingness to expand. But some forms of pre-school provision, notably play-groups, are relatively cheap to set up and run, and their usefulness could well be extended by the addition of the extra help which the minders would provide.

Once the minder was trained, her connection with other pre-school services should be happily established and should continue; she would work as a child-care worker on the staff of a centre, but her work would for the most part be carried out in her own home. The centre would be a base, providing in-service training, support and equipment. The amount the minder used it with her charges and worked in it would depend not only on the age of her minded children, but also on the extent to which the centre was able to adapt itself to wider and varying age ranges. Some minders might be employed as workers at a child-care centre and have special responsibility for acting as relief workers in case of sickness, emergencies and holidays. In this way the children could be cared for by a familiar person in the minder's home, or possibly for some or all of the day at the pre-school centre. One local authority area team we came across in our study was providing a relief service of this kind in the minder's home.

There should, in any case, be access for minded children to some form of additional pre-school provision. The older pre-school child needs space to run and explore, to use large equipment, and in the case of a single minded child he needs to mix with his peers. These forms of provision should not be exclusively for minded children, because services for a single, defined section of the community tend to acquire stigmas of various kinds. What is required is to integrate both the minder and the minded child into the wider field of the pre-school world.

Local authority workers

The local authority should be required to appoint a worker to be responsible as a tutor/worker for the minder in training, and to arrange such courses, groups, meetings and seminars during the training year and subsequently as he feels to be necessary. This worker would supervise the minder in training and continue to do so once she was trained. A suitable ratio might be one worker to seven or eight minders, so that the worker would be seeing to the needs of the 20 or more children looked after by these minders. Parents who wanted a place for their child would approach the local authority worker, who would arrange for a place in consultation with parent and minder and would introduce the child and the parent to the minder. The local authority worker would be responsible thereafter for liaison work with parents. This system would approximate to the Danish system we described in chapter 9, and to the very

similar Swedish system of which a brief account is given in a recent OECD report (1975).

It should be emphasized that good practice in child care requires continuous reinforcement, encouragement and training. The difficulties of the job, and the subtleties of relating to a child, demand that frequent discussion and help be available. This is particularly so when the minder is alone on the job for considerable periods, although attachment to a play-group or other establishment should do much to help with this problem. Help and consultation are particularly important when the minder is about to take on a new child. Contacts with the mother and first contacts with the child need great care and skill. So the tutor-worker should see his job as one of on-going support and training in which he acts not only as tutor to the minder and as link with local authority services, but also as helper to the parent, if required, on behalf of the child.

The local authority should be required to keep up-to-date information on minded children and to inform the appropriate area health uthority of their whereabouts.

Health services

Visits by doctors and/or health visitors are a standard part of the service offered at day nurseries and children's centres. We propose that health visitors should include minded children (at the minder's) routinely in their visiting, even if the child is being seen at home. Minders, after all, often have knowledge about the child which can help the health visitor to form a picture of his development and health. Consultation between health visitor and minder would provide the most obvious means whereby the child could be recommended for specialist services if necessary. Such consultations would have the spin-off of enabling the minder to see herself as a valued part of the child-care service in the area.

Children's centres

All the above proposals are presented as necessary to provide an adequate service. A further proposal is made here which we think would very much improve the service. It would seem sensible on many grounds for local authorities to aim at the provision of children's centres, serving all pre-school children in a small area, and providing all the services for children under one roof (education, care, health services, toy-library). Such a centre would be used by parents for all their children's health, play and education needs. Small local playgroups could also use its facilities. At such a centre the minder could be seen as a child-care worker; along with parents she would use its facilities and her minded children of all ages could greatly benefit from time spent there.

Hoped-for outcomes of these strategies

The minders. These measures would improve the standards of care offered by existing minders and would attract into the service people more highly motivated towards work in child care. Training over a year could be regarded as a qualification in child care, perhaps for play-group work, and this would increase the attractiveness of taking on the job. It is important to attract into this work people whose own children are over five years old, and who are perhaps seeking a permanent adequately paid job. For, as we suggested earlier (see pp. 52 and 67) there are grounds for supposing that mothers of pre-school children may have extra difficulties in relating to other people's children, with the result that both the minder's own young children and the minded children may be required to face a social and emotional situation that they are too immature and insecure to cope with.

The parents. We think that the parent's relationship with the minder would be very much improved by the above proposals. Removal of the pay problem from the personal relationship would remove much personal hostility. Training for minders should increase parents' confidence in them, and both this and provision of more adequate equipment for the children should increase their satisfaction with this form of care. Improved local authority services to parents should help them to establish good relationships with the minders. Regular and frequent visits by the health visitor should ensure that the children's health and development are kept under surveillance, and should increase the parents' confidence that their child is in good hands.

The children. It goes without saying that the above proposals are all ultimately designed to benefit the child. Perhaps the most important benefits to him, beyond those already implied above, would be, firstly, that minding, though still a service given in a private home, would be to a much greater extent open and accountable. The present rather defensive posture of the minder would be likely to give way to a more tolerant and constructive view of mothers and of other workers. As a child-care worker herself, she would have a status and expertise that would enhance her confidence, her reliability and her effectiveness. Secondly, as we suggested earlier (chapter 9), it is to be expected that the child would have a greater chance of a stable placement as a result of improved conditions of work for the minder.

Our proposals are, admittedly, more thorough-going – and therefore more expensive – than some currently being put forward. This is because, in our view, the structural faults in the present situation

cannot be put right by piecemeal action. It seems to us that the impoverished experience of the minded child is not being recognized, let alone dealt with, by those in authority. Yet minded children deserve care equally as good as that given to others of pre-school age who are being looked after outside their own homes. It is, indeed, arguable that childminding, in so far as it is privately carried out and concerns children who may be at risk in other respects, should be *better staffed* and *more carefully controlled* than other forms of care. In addition to this, it is simple justice that if society accepts the work of a parent it should go some way to providing good day-time care for the child.

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Appendix 1*
Childminder's Interview

1. I'd like to ask you some questions about the children you look after and how you spend the day together.
First of all, could you tell me their names and ages and if any of them are related to you? We'll start with the youngest. What is the youngest's name? How old is he? Is he related to you? What time does he usually come to you? What time does he leave? Does he come every day? What about weekends?
So that makes____children you look after. Do you normally look after this number? More or less?
Have you any children of your own? Living here? How old are they? Do you have any other children living with you? How old are they? Are they related to you? So do you look after____and____during the day?

2. I wonder if you could tell me something about X. *Prompt:* When did he first start coming to you? How did he settle down when he first came to you? Is he alright now when he comes each day?

3. What sort of child is he? *Note spontaneous reply.* (a) Is he affectionate? Does he like a cuddle now and then?

4. Can we talk about how you spent yesterday? And first was it a typical/usual sort of day? *If not, ask for detail.*

5. What time did X come yesterday?

6. Who brought him? Did he/she come in? Did you talk with him/her at all? Was anything said about X?

7. Does X's mother (or any of the parents) leave a pram/push chair here? If yes, where do you keep it? Storage for prams, etc., dry?

Morning

8. (a) Did X come after his breakfast? Or did you give him something when he came? *If yes,* (b) Where did he have his breakfast/bottle? (c) What did he have?

9. I wonder if you could tell me what he did in the morning? (a) Did he have a sleep or a rest? *If yes,* (b) Where was that? (c) How long did he rest/sleep for?

10. Did he watch TV in the morning? What did he watch? How long for? Did he sit still and watch?

11. (a) Indoors, where does he play, mostly? (b) And is there anywhere he can play outside? *If yes:* Did he go out to play in the garden/yard?

12. What sort of things does he most like playing with? What toys does he like best? What about household things? And what about messy things? (paint, sand, water)? Does he like that sort of thing? Can you sometimes let him play with messy things? What about yesterday? *And establish what toys available for X's use.*

* *Appendices 1 and 3, as set out here, omit spacing and boxes for recording data. They also omit our scoring system for rating interaction.*

13a. *If X the only child at minder's.* Will he play on his own? What does he spend most time doing? How long will he play? What about yesterday? What did he do/play?
or
13b. *If X one of 2 or more children at minder's.* Does he mostly play with the other children, or does he like to get on by himself?
So does he sometimes/ever play on his own? What are the things he likes doing? . . . playing with, on his own? How will he do that/play with that? What about yesterday? What did he do/play?

14. So, on the whole, does he spend most of the time playing with the others/alone? Or is he around you a lot? Does he like a lot of attention from you? What does he do to get your attention? How was he yesterday on this?

15. Does he talk a lot? What does he talk about? Does he ask you lots of questions? What about?

16. Did you play with him or sit with him in the morning? Sing to him? Tell him a story?

17. Is he toilet trained yet? Dry? Clean? *If yes:* Does he take himself to the toilet? Does he ask you when he wants to go? Does he ever have accidents? In the last week? What do you do about that? *If no:* Did you have to change his nappy yesterday morning? How often? What do you think is the best way of training him?

18. Did you take him/them out in the morning? *If yes:* Where? Not out / out to shops / to PS (re other children) (primary school) / to playground / to PG, NS, DN / other.

19. And how was he during the morning? Did you have any trouble with him? *Prompt:* Was he moany, miserable? Off-colour, sick? What did you do about that?

20. And was he naughty at all? What did he do? What happened? What did you do about that?

21. Does he sometimes do things that get you down? What sort of things? How do you deal with that? Do you sometimes have to smack him? In the last week, have you had to smack him? How often? Or do you have other ways of stopping him/controlling him?

22. Did anyone come to see you in the morning?

23. Did you give him his dinner/feed him? *If yes:* (a) What did he have? (Get detail of food). (b) Where did he have it? . . . table, high-chair, cot/pram? (c) Does he feed himself? Can he drink from a cup? Does he have a bottle? What about yesterday?

Afternoon

24. What did you do with them in the afternoon? (a) Did you give them a rest? *If yes:* (b) Where was that? In which room? (c) How long did he sleep/rest for?

25. Did he watch TV in the afternoon? What did he watch? How long for? Did he sit still and watch it?

26. Did he go out to play in the garden/yard? What did he do/play?

27. You must have been busy yourself. Did you sit with him, play with him, tell him a story, sing to him? *If yes:* Where do you settle yourselves down for that? Does he sit with you, on your knee for a time?

28. Did you have to change his nappy yesterday afternoon? How often?

29. Did you take him/them out in the afternoon? *If yes:* Where? Not out / to shops / to PS (re other children) / to PS, NS, DN / to playground / other. If to PG, DN, NS or playground, how many times each week do you take him there? Does he ever spend time with other children his own age?

30. In the last week (7 days), how many times have you taken X/them out? If PG, NS, DN or playground not mentioned, *ask:* (a) Do you take him to a PG, etc.? How often? (b) Does he spend time with other children his own age? How often?

31. Did you have any trouble with him in the afternoon? *Prompt:* Was he moany or miserable? Off-colour? What did you do about that?

32. And was he naughty at all? What happened? What did you do about that?

33. Did anyone come to see you in the afternoon?

34. Did you feed him again before he went home? *If yes:* (a) What did he have? (b) Where?

35. (Apart from your own children) did you look after any older children, in the evening after school? *If yes:* (a) How many? (b) How old are they? (c) What time do they go home?

36. Can he dress himself? Put his coat on . . . and off? Shoes on . . . and off? Does he like to be helped? Do you usually let him do that himself? What about yesterday?

37. At the end of the day, who collected him? (a) Did he/she come in? (b) Did you have a chat with him/her? Was there anything you specially wanted to talk with him/her about? Anything about X? *Explore.* (c) *If no to 37b.* In the last week have you talked to his mother/father about X? *Explore.*

38. Do you know the business address/telephone number of X's mother/father? *If not:* What would you do if you had to get in touch with them during the day?

39. Now, I wonder if you could tell me a few things about yourself? (a) Where were you born? (b) Where were you brought up? (c) Could you tell me the year of your birth?

40. Could you tell me when you first started looking after other people's children as a job? Has that been continuous, or have you done other work/stopped between times? Continuous time as minder to date (years). . . . Work history (with dates and own children's birth dates).

41. And apart from child-minding, have you had any other job? *If yes:* What job(s) did you have before you became a minder? So what was your main job?

42. Looking after other people's children is very important and sometimes difficult work. Could you tell me why you chose this particular job? Why are you still doing this job? (a) What sort of things do you think a woman should know about to be a good minder?

43. Some councils/authorities run training schemes, or sets of meetings for minders. Have you been to anything like that? Or done any other training that has been useful to you in doing this work? When? *Evaluate usefulness of training.*

44. Do you think child-minders need to be given some special training for their work?

45a. *If child minder has had no training:* Is there any part of the work that you think you need to know more about? *Note spontaneous reply, and prompt:* For instance, anything to do with children's health, first aid, play, feeding them, helping them in any way?
or
45b. *If child minder has had some training:* Is there any part of the work you feel you would like to know more about? *Note spontaneous reply, and prompt:* For instance, anything to do with children's health, first aid, play, feeding them, helping them in any way? Or anything else?

46. What do you like about this job? *Note spontaneous reply, and prompt:* Anything else?

47. Is there anything you don't like about it? *Note spontaneous reply, and prompt:* Anything else?

48. How long do you intend to go on minding? (a) Is there any other work you would rather be doing? (b) What do you think about mothers of young children (i.e. under five years) going out to work? Do you think it's a good idea? Why?

49. I wonder if you could tell me how you manage to fit all your own work in? What about *housework?* And *shopping?* Is that a problem? Do you find it difficult to do that with X/the children about? Do you sometimes have to leave them for a minute while you run to the shops? . . . Yesterday? . . . How often last week? And what about seeing your *own friends* during the day? Is that difficult? Do you ever feel lonely? Cut off?

50. *If appropriate:* And what about your *own children?* Do you take them to school? . . . and fetch them?

51. *If appropriate:* How do you manage with your own as well as these/the minded children, after school? How do they all get on together? Any problems?

52. What about the money side of the job? (a) How do you decide what to charge? Do you ever have any trouble with payment? (b) What do you charge for X per week? Does that include food? *Get details.* (c) Are you happy with this amount?

53. And have you ever had any (other) kinds of trouble with parents? Or serious trouble with children? Have you ever had to ask a mother to stop bringing her child to you?

54. What happens if you are ill or there is a crisis. . . . What happens about X then?
(a) Can we talk about services offered by the council? What about taking him to the clinic? Does his Mother do that, or does she ask you to take him?
And: Have you been with X in the last 12 months? If so, *ask:* What happened on that occasion: (a) Weighing? (b) Check-up? (c) Injections? (d) Advice on medical matter? (e) Advice on non-medical matter?

55. In the last 6 months, have you been visited at home by: (a) A health visitor? (b) Anyone else from the council? (c) Social worker; in connection with the children you look after?
If yes: (a) What was the visit about? (b) has this contact been helpful to you?

	Health visitor	*Council*	*Social worker*	*Other*
Helpful generally				
Helpful specifically				
Not helpful generally				
Not helpful specifically				
No help needed				

56. And in general, what about the service offered by the council? Are you happy about that? *Note spontaneous reply.*
If yes or no: Are there any ways you think the service from the council could be improved? *Note spontaneous reply, and prompt:* For instance: contacts, information, financial help, help with toys, equipment, training?
(a) Or, for instance, if you have difficulties with parents or with the children's behaviour?

57. Would you prefer to be employed by the council? Paid by them? Or are you happy to deal direct with the parents?

58. Are you insured (for your childminder work). If not, have you ever considered insuring yourself as a childminder? Has the council ever suggested it?

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Appendix 2
Assessment of Childminders

Interview No._____ Date of Interview_____

A. Safety and Hygiene

Rooms used by children: (1) Heaters safe; (2) comfortable furniture and floor-coverings; (3) children have space to play; (4) play-space safe.
(5) Children can play outside safely.
(6) Children not confined to one room for eating, sleeping and playing (if more than one child).
(7) Children washed, nappies changed.
(8) (for 36+) Washing place and lavatory available and suitable for child's use.
(9) Cooked meal provided if present for 5 hours (M).*
(10) Children taken out at least 3 times a week (M).
(11) Storage for prams, push-chairs is dry.

B. Socialization

(12) Minder initiates vocalization/speech to child (except scolding) during visit.
(13) Minder tells stories/sings songs to children (M).
(14) Minder initiates/encourages/advances play during interview.
(15) Minder can describe child's play yesterday – with reference to specific toys/activities.
(16) Child sits at table (high chair) for meals (M).
(17) Child feeds himself (M).
(18) Child associates with other children once a week (M).
(19) Child visits playgroup or park-playground once a week (M).
(19A) Minder plays/sings with child on lap (M).
Toys available for child's use: (20) soft toys; (21) toys for imaginative play (dolls, forts, animals, tea-set); (22) crayons, paper, etc.; (23) books; (24) building toys, stacking, nesting toys, form-boards, posting-toys, beads, jigsaws; (25) medium-wheel toys, miniature cars; (26) riding toy/climbing toy/baby walker.

C. Emotional care

(a) *Avoidance of restriction and punishment*
(27) Minder does not express overt annoyance with or hostility towards child during visit.
(28) Minder neither slaps nor spanks child during visit.
(29) Minder reports no more than one physical punishment during last week.
(30) Minder does not speak slightingly of child during visit.
(31) Minder does not scold child during visit.
(32) Minder does not interfere with child's actions or restrict child's movements more than three times during visit.

(b) *Positive behaviour towards child*
(33) Minder indicates esteem/praise for child's behaviour/manner.
(34) When speaking of child, minder's voice conveys positive feeling.
(35) When speaking to child, minder's voice conveys positive feeling.
(36) Minder caresses or kisses child at least once during visit.
(37) Minder can give differentiated description/individualized account of child's character/development/behaviour.

* (M) *indicates information derived from minder.*

D. Minder's attitudes to childminding

(38) Minder describes fostering the development of children as one function of a minder.
(39) Minder describes her relationship with child's mother as one which is orientated to child's needs.
(40) Minder does not express general hostility to/disparagement of parents of minded children.
(41) Minder focuses on children and not on own problems during interview.
(42) Minder values non-physical rather than physical means of controlling children.
(43) Minder gives work-time address/telephone number of parent.

Minder's use of English:

Child initiates interaction:

	touches	*brings object*	*vocalises*	*cries*
Minder				
(a) accepts				
(b) tolerates				
(c) rejects				

Total: Child initiates interaction____times during interview.

Appendix 3*
Childminding Project: Mother's Interview

Section A: Family composition

(1) Could you tell me the names and ages of your children starting with the eldest (establish where child is living):

Name	*date of birth*	*sex*	*where child is living*

(2) And do any other children normally live here with you?

(3) And who else normally lives with you in the household?
(4) So there are____ of you altogether living in this household?
(5) *If no husband living with mother:* Are you widowed, divorced, separated or unmarried?
(6) And could you tell me which year you were born?
(7) Where were you born?
(8) And brought up?

Section B: Husband's work

(9) What is your husband's job, or *if not working at present*, what was his last job? If not working, *ask:* (a) is he – unemployed / sick / disabled / retired / other; (b) how long is it since he was last employed?
(10) What hours does your husband work? *Probe* for clear picture.
(11) Does his work ever take him away from home? If yes, *ask:* How often is he normally away for each month?

Section C: Mother's work

Can I ask you some questions now about your work, and about how you usually spend your working day? May I ask about work first?
(12) If we could start with when you left school_____ How old were you? So that was in 19____.
(13) *Get complete work-history* (including periods of training and non-employment). (a) job; (b) dates; (c) children's dates of birth; (d) effects of children on working hours and employment.

Present job

(14) What have been the advantages for you of working, apart from money? *Probe:* e.g. have you gained anything, has it made any difference to how you feel or to what you can do?

* *See note on p. 85.*

(15) And what have been the disadvantages of working? *Probe:* e.g. do you think you have missed out in any ways, has it stopped you doing things you would have liked to do?

(16) Do you enjoy your present job? What do you enjoy/dislike about it? Is there anything you don't like/like about it?

(17) Is there any other sort of job or work or training you would prefer to be doing?

(18) If you had more money coming into the family from another source, would you still go out to work? *If yes:* (a) Would you cut down the number of hours you work, or continue as now? *If cut hours, ask:* (b) What level would you cut your hours to? (c) Why would you cut your hours? *If no, ask:* (d) Why would you prefer not to work? *Probe:* Are there things you feel you've missed out on by being at work?

Section D: Present caretaking arrangements

(19) Could we talk about how you arrange your working day? What time do you get up? What time do you leave home? And get back in the evening? And finally get off to bed yourself?

(20) So what happens to X/the children during those hours? For each child under 12 years, establish: (a) provision(s); (b) escort; (c) caretaker; (d) times of starting and finishing.

(21) For X, *also ask:* How long does it take to get to the childminder?

(22) For X, *also ask:* How do you get there? (transport).

(22A) Then how long does it take for you to get to work? Transport?

(23) Do you take/send any supplies to her for X? e.g. nappies, food, fruit, milk, a bottle, sweets, bibs, clothes, toys, or anything else? Get detail: e.g. Do you provide all (the nappies) for him, or is it just to help out?

If mother takes/collects to/from CM, ask 24, 25, 26

(24) Do you usually go into Mrs N's with X when you leave him? Yesterday?

(25) Do you talk to her in the morning? About X?

(26) Then at the end of the day, when you pick him up, do you have a chat with Mrs N? Yesterday? *Note spontaneous reply. Prompt:* Does she tell you how X got on that day? Or do you ask her? What about the last week?

(27) *If mother doesn't usually take or collect X.* And do you sometimes get a chance to talk to Mrs N yourself? When is that? What about the last week?

(27A) You must both be tired at the end of the day/when you get home. Is that a difficult time for you and X? Do you have any difficulties with him then____ in the last 4 weeks? What happens?

(28) In the evening, when you get home, what sort of things do you have to do then?

(29) Do you get any regular help with any of these jobs from your husband ____, your mother____, any other relative____, anyone else____?

(30) And what about bed-time for X? When does he go to bed? How long does it take him to settle (last 4 weeks)? Then does he usually sleep all night? If he wakes, how long does he take to settle again?

(30A) And what about the other children? What time is it when you've finally finished for the day/when they are all settled in bed?

(31) So after you've finished all your jobs and the children are settled, what happens then? Do you get some time to yourself then? *If yes:* What do you do then? Is this the best time of the day for you? If not, when is? *If no:* Do you wish you had more time to yourself? How about the weekend? Is that a better time for you?

(32) Are you happy with the way you've got things (your life, your days, your routine) arranged? *Prompt:* Are there any difficult times/points that we haven't talked about?

Present childminder
(33) Could you tell me something about your present minding arrangement for X? First, how did you find this (present) minder?
(34) How about the way she looks after X? Does he eat well there? Does he have a sleep? Are the sleeping arrangements alright? What about keeping him clean? Are you happy about all these things?
(35) Did he settle down there alright? Does he get on well with her now/is he fond of her? Does he like going there? Is he ever not so happy about going? What do you do about that?
(36) What about if he's naughty/miserable/moany with her? What does she do about that? Are you happy about that? (i.e. what she does).
(36A) What happens if the CM is ill, or has a crisis. Do you (or does she) have any emergency arrangements?
(37) Do you know how they spend the day together? *Note spontaneous reply. Prompt:* Does she have toys for the children? Can she find time to play with them? Is there enough space for playing? Any safe outside space? Does she manage to take them out? How often? Where to?
(38) Do you and X talk about his day with Mrs N? What does he tell you about the time he spends there? What about yesterday? (a) What do you think he most likes about being with her? (b) And is there anything he doesn't like?
(39) So on the whole are you happy with this childminder? From X's point of view? From yours?
(40) And is there anything you don't like about her? From X's point of view? From yours?
(40A) What about payment? What do you pay for him? Is that all right____ too much?
(41) Is there anywhere else you would prefer him to be at? *If yes:* What type of pre-school provision(s)? Attempt made / result of attempt.
(42) And how do you think he's come on since he's been with Mrs N? Are you happy with the way he's progressing?
(43) What sort of child is he? *Note spontaneous reply.*
(43A) What do you most enjoy about him?
(44) And do you have any problems with him at the moment (during last 4 weeks)? What about eating / sleeping / wetting / soiling / anything else, e.g. whining? *Establish what problem is* / extent of disruption to family / time duration of problem / stress for mother.
(44A) What happens if he's ill? *Establish arrangements.*

Section E: Past caretaking arrangements
i.e. For all mother's children from birth to 12 years.
(45) Could we talk about the arrangements you've made in the past to have X/the children looked after? Shall we start with X? *Then* for each child get full pre-school provision history, to include: (a) type of placement; (b) age began; (c) time attended; (d) payment; (e) M's satisfaction for X; (f) M's satisfaction for self; (g) reason for change. And for each placement ask: Was there anywhere else you would have preferred him to go? *If yes:* What did you do about getting him in there? What happened?

Section F: Mother's worries
(46) I'd like to mention some things which can happen to families and may be upsetting when they occur. We are trying to find out how common they are.

Could you tell me if any of these have happened in the last 12 months? A miscarriage, a stillbirth, an abortion, death of a child, death of a relative, death of a friend, a close friend or relation moving away so you no longer see them except rarely. *If yes to any of the above items, following areas for each one:* (a) when it occurred and what happened; (b) if it was very sudden or some warning was given; (c) how it affected mother and family, i.e. how upsetting it was; (d) how long mother and family affected and if still affected; (e) any effect on mother's work, father's work and child-care arrangements. (f) Did you get any help on this? (g) Did you talk it over with anyone?

(47) In the last 12 months have there been any particular worries about: the children; your husband – health, work; your work; relative's health; housing; money, HP, debts; any legal trouble; anything else (specify). *If yes to any of above, ask:* (a) what problem was; (b) when it began, how long it lasted, if sudden or expected; (c) how mother and family affected, including disruption/limitation to lives, degree of worry, disruption to work or to child-care arrangements; (d) any help sought or obtained; (e) did you talk it over with anyone else?

(48) Who would you turn to if you did have a worry or a problem (a difficulty, anything you wanted to talk about)? *Note spontaneous reply, and prompt:* What about your husband / parents / other relatives / friends / social worker / GP / other.

Section G: Own childhood

(49) Could we talk a bit about your own childhood? You were born in_____ and brought up in_____. Do you remember who you spent most of your time with when you were small (i.e. before statutory school age)? If at pre-school provision? Or where you spent your time? *Prompt:* Do you remember if your own mother went out to work when you were a young child? What happened about you? Can you remember how you felt about that?

Section H: Child's health/services

(50) Could we talk a bit about any services you may have used in the last year for the children, or for the family? Have you taken X to a child welfare clinic in the last 12 months? *If no:* Is there any special reason why you haven't taken him? And find out if CM takes child and who holds X's child welfare clinic book? *If yes:* When was that? Have you taken him more than once?

(51) I'd like to mention some social services. Could you tell me if you have had contact with a social worker or other worker from any of these places in the last 12 months? (a) Social services department, the education welfare department, the probation service, social security, the child guidance clinic, any voluntary organization. (b) Have you seen any other welfare or social worker or HV from any other organization or department in the last 12 months? *For each agency contacted:* (c) How often have you seen a social or welfare worker from (agency) in the last 12 months? (NB: Includes home and office visits.) *Only to be asked if mother in contact with welfare agency. For each agency contacted probe:* (a) reason for contact; (b) if agency or welfare/social workers have helped in any way.

Section I: Housing

May I ask you some questions about your housing?

(52) How many rooms are there altogether in this flat/house? Persons per room_____.

(53) Are you buying or renting the house/flat? *If renting:* Is it from the council or private? Is it furnished or unfurnished?

(54) Which floor is the living room on?

(55) Description of housing: Whole house? Flat? Other?

(56) Which of the following amenities do you have?

	not present	*shared*	*not shared*
bath			
kitchen			
running hot water			
indoor lavatory			
outdoor lavatory			
garden			
telephone			

Do you like the house/flat? *Probe:* what mother particularly likes and dislikes about the house/flat_____Whether it is on the whole satisfactory for family_____ *If not* what would be more satisfactory_____. *If house/flat satisfactory* what improvements/changes mother would like in house/flat_____.

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